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Summer program marks 40 years

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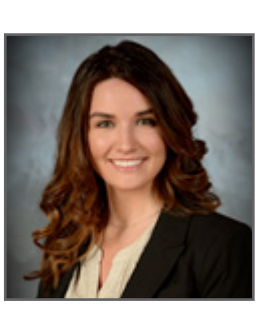

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"If I can't find it in West Hartford Center, I don't need it." – *Woody Exley*

See story page 27

ON THE COVER

Cogsworth (Patrick King) and Belle (Gabrielle Baker) perform in the West Hartford Summer Arts Festival's 40th anniversary presentation of Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" at Northwest Catholic High School.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
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Courtesy photo

Tenor Michael Paul Krubitzer sings the title role in "Faust."

Photo by Lynn Woike

Winning this year's American Opera Idol is Soprano Nadia Aguilar Regalado. She will play Gretel in November's production of "Hänsel and Gretel."

Opera Connecticut

25th anniversary marked with name change

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Connecticut Concert Opera has grown and changed so much in its 25 years that it changed its name to Opera Connecticut, reflecting its transformation.

"It was interesting how it happened," President John Wadhams said of the company's start in 1991.

"I was on the board of music and choir at Asylum Hill Congregational Church and I went to the Glimmerglass opera production of a Mozart opera, 'Il Re Pastore,' an obscure one. ... it was the story about the childhood of Alexander the Great. And then I sent a note to our organist and choirmaster, who was head of the music and choir committee, that we should do as part of our concert series a small concert opera. He didn't react to that at all, but two members of our choir did and came to me when they got their copy of this note and they said, 'We have always wanted to start a little concert opera company in Hartford.'"

The two were Carter "Toby" Hall, a pianist, singer, teacher and composer who accompanied major singers at the Metropolitan Opera, and tenor Wayne Rivera, who teaches voice at The Hartt School and has toured 26 countries as a member of the Metropolitan Opera Studio and has performed as a soloist with most of the major U.S. symphonies.

Together they wrote a business plan.

"They both had a lot of friends, and we had the use of [Rivera's] big, gorgeous Georgian colonial home in South Glastonbury where we had our initial fundraising event," Wadhams said.

"You could seat 70 on folding chairs, and we had standing room only. Toby played and Wayne sang and Mary Fox, who was another signer, sang and we raised about $7,500."

More than $4,000 additional money was raised "and we had enough to fund our first show, which was in Simsbury at the Westminster School. They'd just opened their new auditorium, Centennial Theater."

For the first four or five years, he said, there was only a piano accompanist.

Rivera, artistic director emeritus, explained, "We tried to do operas that were not done by local companies. ... We chose some pretty big works" that could be done without the expense of costumes and sets. All were operas chosen because they "worked well with the 'park and bark' situation" of concert opera. Local talent was tapped as much as possible, Rivera added.

The forth year, the company did "I Puritani" by Bellini, using the Wesleyan University orchestra, said Rivera, who was teaching voice there. The production also used the Concora chorus. Performances were done at the university and at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church Hartford.

For the past 12 years, they have been at the University of Saint Joseph.

"Before that, our main performing venue was the Wallace Stevens Theater at the Hartford Insurance Group ... but we outgrew that because the stage wasn't large enough to accommodate our orchestra. We began getting serious about the orchestra and hiring musicians from the Hartford Symphony and so we needed another place," Wadhams said, noting, "We did a show at the Roberts Theater with orchestra before we moved to Saint Joseph's."

The opera company does one big show a year.

"We put on some of the larger and more obscure works," Rivera said, noting that especially successful were "La fille du régiment (The Daughter of the Regiment)" by Donizetti, for which some costumes and concert staging were done, and "Mefistofele" by Boito, that had a stereophonic sound effect with the chorus and organ up in the loft in the back of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, and the orchestra and soloists down in front by the altar.

Each production is about a year in the making, said Doris Lang Karloff, artistic director since 2005.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Kosloff has held many prominent positions in the field of opera, including the executive director of the Hartford Conservatory, and the artistic and managing director of the Connecticut Opera. She is now the director of vocal studies at The Hartt School and the director of its opera theater.

"We were the alternative company," she said. "We could do more obscure operas because we were small."

Wadhams agreed, saying, "The Connecticut Opera, like a lot of regional operas, had to stick to a repertory that was pretty familiar, where people could recognize some of the major tunes, arias, and they didn't stray away from that very much. We, Connecticut Concert Opera, now Opera Connecticut, could fill in the blanks."

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The children's chorus, along with Laurentiu Rotaro (Sacristan), perform during dress rehearsal at the Hoffman Auditorium.

Singers would wear formal concert dress – tuxedos for men and gowns for women.

While it's more limited, "it's a very different product. It's a very worthy product. It's all about the singing," she said.

When she first came, lyric translations were printed in the event program. As the first person in Connecticut to institute live supertitles while at Connecticut Opera, Kosloff did the same when she came to Connecticut Concert Opera.

"It was one of the first things I instituted," she said, explaining it allowed patrons to watch the singers and see the translation at the same time.

Then, she added minimal stage direction, a bit of action and a few set pieces and props. For instance, if someone were writing a letter, there would be a desk, a chair, a pen and paper.

"After that came costumes and makeup," Kosloff said.

Now, high-definition projection against the back wall of the stage allows for scenery.

"That's where we are now. We have fully staged, fully produced opera."

With performances no longer concert style, she said she suggested to the board – and it agreed – that it was time for the name change.

"We've done some very amazing things," she said. "We're a nonprofit. We're here to spend our money doing opera. We do it more efficiently than any other opera company in the country."

"Opera is not scary if it's done right, and my whole mission in life is to demystify opera," she said of the art form begun in Italy in the 1600s. "Opera doesn't have to be complicated or difficult. It shouldn't be."

"She's kind of a wonder woman," Wadhams said of Kosloff and all she's done.

In 2009, Kosloff came up with the idea for the American Opera Idol competition as an alternative to "just another concert" because, she said, "There are so many young singers out there."

While most operatic voices are age 20-33, the organization's annual competition is open to ages 14-54.

"We've done some very amazing things. We're a nonprofit. We're here to spend our money doing opera. We do it more efficiently than any other opera company in the country."

–Doris Lang Kosloff

The first year, there was only one prize. In subsequent years, additional donors have stepped up to offer generous cash prizes.

This year, 57 applications were submitted. Although they are in the United States, they come from such countries as Russia, Mexico, Canada and South Korea, she said.

Opera Connecticut selected 10 who were invited to compete; they traveled from as far away as Texas, Virginia and Pennsylvania to the Pond House in Elizabeth Park for the sold-out event July 14. Each sang an aria; during intermission, the judges narrowed the field to five, who each then sang again.

Since the start, the audience has chosen the winner – first by paper ballot and then by texting. This year, Nadia Aguilar Regalado took first place. It was the second year she competed; last year, the Hartford resident came in third.

She started her voice studies in 2008, attends The Hartt School and made her debut in 2013 as Lauretta in the opera "Gianni Schicchi" by Giacomo Puccini.

"I'm very thrilled and happy," she said. "It's a big thing for me."

The other prizewinners were chosen by Kosloff and the judges, who this year were two international singers – Robert Brubaker and Lynne Strow Piccolo – and music critic Larry Kellum.

On November 4 and 6, Opera Connecticut will perform "Hänsel and Gretel."

"Hänsel and Gretel was the first opera I ever saw," Wadhams said. "I was 8 and it was [at] Eno Memorial Hall. It was a traveling road show and I remember being very impressed with the angels and the stairway."

The opera requires a larger-than-normal orchestra and will include ballet dancers and the children's choir from St. James's Episcopal Church.

"This is going to be the first time we've built some scenery," he said of the witch's house.

"We have Anthony Laciura, a veteran of 850 performances at the Metropolitan Opera. He is known for the comic parts that he has played. He has a tenor voice and he can sing well, but he's not hired for his tenor voice, he's hired for his stage presence and his ability to carry off a comic – buffa – opera character. Anthony is going to play the witch. … Anthony's done dozens of witch performances," Wadhams said, calling it "one of Laciura's signature roles."

"It's amazing how people who have been in the opera industry enjoy working with us," he said, adding, "He'll just come in and wow us all, I think."

Laciura, who is retired and living in New Jersey, knows Opera Connecticut's stage director, Sandra Kelly.

"She herself has done the witch. She knows Anthony because they've done a lot of things together at the Met," Wadhams said, explaining that when she spoke about November's opera, he asked to be the witch.

"He will be singing with some younger singers who have not yet appeared on the Met Stage, but are very, very good singers. They've appeared in other opera companies," Wadhams said.

Kosloff wrote her own English translation for "Hänsel and Gretel," so it will be sung in English.

Speaking of her "ethnicity-blind casting," she said the mother and father are both Americans, Hänsel will be played by Regalado who is from Mexico, Gretel is from the Netherlands

Photo by Laura Soll Public Relations

John Wadhams, president, and Doris Lang Kosloff, artistic director, have helped Connecticut Concert Opera evolve into Opera Connecticut.

and is half Chinese. A man will play the witch.

"It's going to be a great show," Wadhams said.

Opera Connecticut's board of directors is responsible for promoting and financing the show, building an audience and encouraging people to write a check, he said.

"John applied for a lot of grants, some of which we got" and continue to get, Rivera said.

In addition to the straightforward annual appeal letter with a goal of netting $20,000, the company raises money by running bus trips organized by Wadhams and his wife. Its 19th weekend trip to Cooperstown, New York, and the Glimmerglass Festival was in early July, while two days trips were planned for later in the month – Glimmerglass and the Bard Summerscape Music Festival – bringing that number to 31.

While noting that opera is "a very expensive art form," Wadhams said, "We're solvent. We don't owe a nickel. Never have owed a nickel. We work very hard at our fundraising and basically we have the opera paid for before the doors open," he said.

Rivera credits artistic quality and responsible economics for the organization's 25 years of success.

"We try to keep ticket prices very, very low … and do pieces that are unique."

He also praised a devoted board that has had very little turnover.

Elizabeth Norman, who lives in Canton, is one of the newer volunteers on the organization's 13-person board. She sang with the United States Army Band and Chorus and now sings wherever opportunities present themselves.

"I realized it would be a different side of the table," she said of being asked to join the board.

"Several years ago, the artistic director asked me to be a judge in the American Opera Idol competition, and that was the first time I had judged a competition or audition."

She found it interesting after always being the one presenting herself.

Serving on the board also allows her to "help bring opera to a variety of audiences."

Norman explained, "I frequently speak with people who tell me they hate opera and I say, 'OK, there are types of music I don't particularly like. How many operas have you been to?' And they go, 'None.'

"I think that what happens is that people, since they don't attend, they make decisions that are not based on actual knowledge. They make decisions based on perceptions of what opera is. … I believe when people are exposed, they can enjoy it. So, what we're tying to do is figure out a way to get new people to just walk through the door."

One way is by putting on operas for children, something Kosloff was eager to begin.

In April, Opera Connecticut presented two performances of "Little Red Riding Hood" at St. James's Episcopal Church.

"It was exciting to see young children so engaged. Afterwards, they had the opportunity to talk to the cast," Norman said.

After seeing its success, Kosloff is certain Opera Connecticut will continue offering children's operas – something, she said, no one else is doing. **WHL**

For more information, visit operaconnecticut.org.

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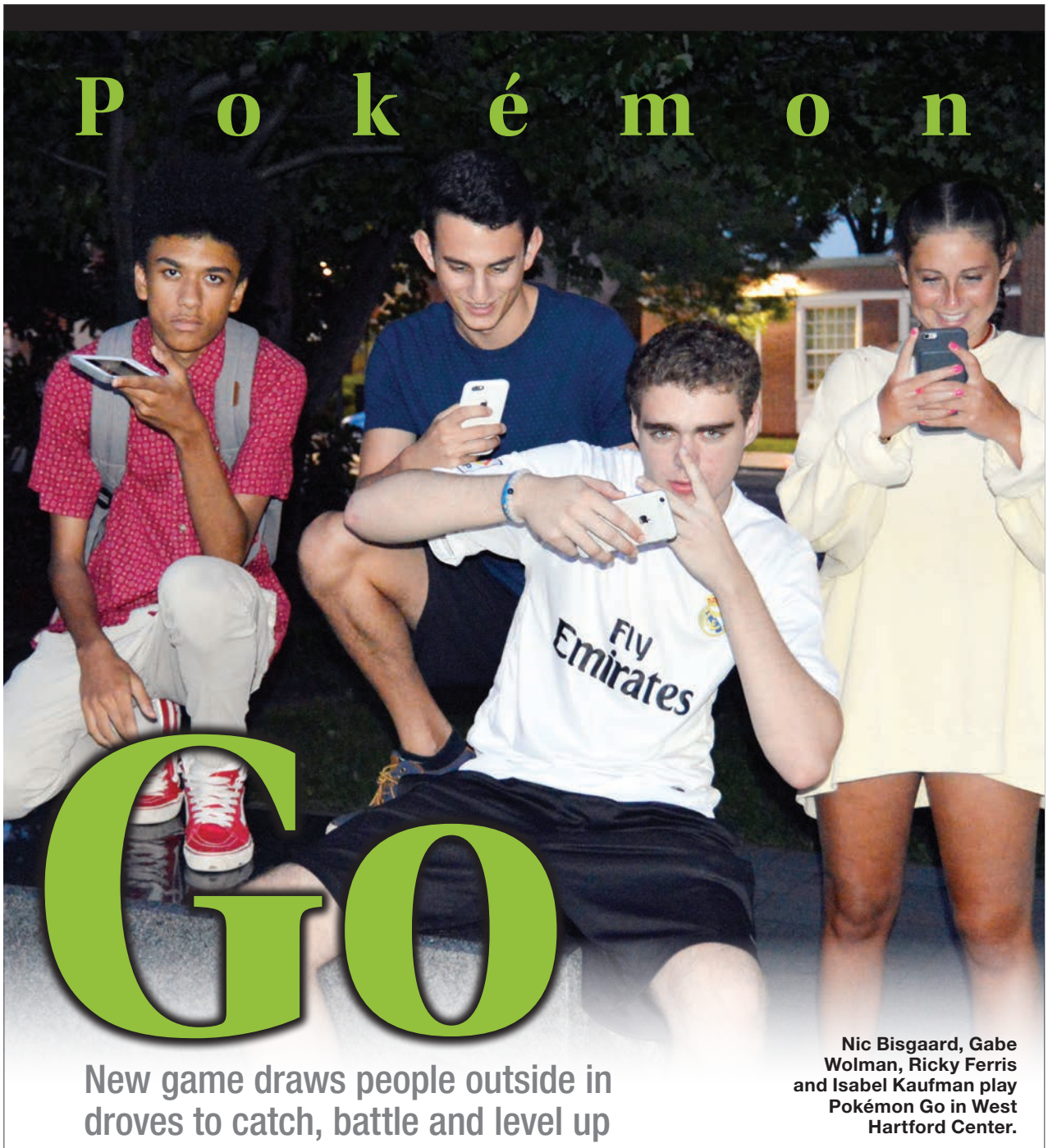

Nic Bisgaard, Gabe Wolman, Ricky Ferris and Isabel Kaufman play Pokémon Go in West Hartford Center.

New game draws people outside in droves to catch, battle and level up

by Lynn Woike
Editor

A free download is turning couch potatoes into questers for the Holy Grail in West Hartford and around the globe. If you're between the ages of 10 and 30, chances are you're already playing.

Using your smartphone's GPS signal, the Pokémon Go app knows where you are and shows you the location of the closest Pokémon. To move your on-screen avatar to that cyber place, you have to physically move through the real world.

In the physical surroundings will be creatures, each with its own attributes that can grow stronger with training. Just as in the original Pokémon game, the goal is to capture all 151 of them to earn the title of Pokémon Master.

Using the phone's GPS, the game creates a world through Google maps so the player's avatar is on the map which is a representation of wherever the user is standing. It then detects Pokémon within a certain radius; walking toward them will cause random encounters.

Tucker Wright has been playing Pokémon since he was "super young" and using his Gameboy Color. He downloaded the new Pokémon Go app the second day it was out, and, in less than a week, he had caught 50 of the 151 different Pokémon in the game.

He said playing it got him out of the house. After sunset on a warm summer evening, he and two friends were at the West Hartford Veterans Memorial at the corner of Farmington Avenue and North Main Street.

So were about 50 other people.

Nic Bisgaard, Gabe Wolman, Ricky Ferris, Isabel Kaufman and James Woods were among them.

Bisgaard had more than 100 Pokémon, including 63 different ones.

He grew up playing Pokémon and credited the new game's wild success with the fact it was a free download and just about anyone with a smartphone and the ability to walk around outside can play it.

Having a car to get more places is an advantage, Wolman said.

Being able to fight members of other teams adds interest, Bisgaard and Ferris agreed.

The game designates gyms, which are areas where these fights can occur. When players reach Level 5, they are prompted to join one of three teams, and the teams fight for control of the gyms. The teams are Team Instinct (yellow), Team Mystic (blue) and Team Valor (red). The team system encourages competition among players.

There have been gyms at the Pentagon and the White House, as well at Blue Back Square and St. James's Episcopal Church.

"I'm addicted," said Tiffany Butler, 16, of Enfield, as she joined the group with her friend, Emily Brantner.

She estimated she plays about three hours a day, and had reached Level 14, higher than the others in

Tiffany Butler and Emily Brantner show off their Pokémon Go skills.

Photos by Lynn Woike

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Photo by Lynn Woike

Nic Bisgaard taunts Ricky Ferris with his better score.

the immediate area.

"My brother and I used to play when were younger. This sort of brings back memories. It's also really satisfying," she said.

Wolman and Ferris said if weren't playing the game, they'd be at home watching Netflix. Bisgaard said he would have been home reading music blogs.

Instead, they were all meeting up in the Center and engaging in Pokémon-related conversations with other players. Non-Pokémon conversations were also taking place.

Bisgaard expects there to be new features added to the game to keep its popularity from waning, such as the ability to fight with a friend.

Joshua Marcus, 25, also played the original Pokémon, and kept up with the franchise as it grew to include video games on Gameboy, trading cards, a cartoon and, later, more video games for various Nintendo consoles. His most recent purchase had been in 2014.

"The franchise hasn't changed in 20 years," Marcus said.

"Actually, I was a little skeptical. I didn't think it was going to be anything special, but the excitement caught on immediately so I downloaded it," he said.

He estimated he spends about an hour a day chasing Pokémon: a 15- or 20-minute walk during lunch, then a bike ride after work.

"I've had pretty bad luck," he said of the 20 different Pokémon he's gotten in less than a week. He said he hopes to explore more places.

"It's getting people outside, moving," Marcus said, noting there are Pokéstops "around the Noah Webster statue – there's always been a crowd of 10 or 20 people doing it. Outside of bars, there're people doing it. Pretty much anywhere."

They are generally local places of interest. Places of worship are also common.

Pokéstops can be used for lure modules, in-game items that a player can activate that lure in stronger and more rare Pokémon to the area. Lure modules stay active for half an hour, real-time, and benefit all players in the area.

"We are learning where all the churches and synagogues are," said Gabriella True, who started to play the game along with her son.

"We are driving, mostly, but we are seeing monuments and sculptures we have never really paid attention to. We walked around Hall and Eisenhower Park today," she said, adding they were planning to go to Fernwood Park and Fairview Cemetery.

"I am pretty sure our dog has never been walked this much," she said.

"One Pokémon ate some of my Lox Stock & Bagels with me this morning," True said. "It's a total hoot."

"My daughters both play and got me playing too," said Jody Angell.

"From a mom's point of view, I love that the game is getting the kids outside and has them walking around. They keep asking if we can go for a walk or a hike or explore a new place. What I didn't expect, however, was to meet so many people by playing it."

Walking around the Center, Angell said they've "met really nice people, all ages, who were also playing the game."

"Reality is, people are addicted to screens, [so] they might as well be looking at screens while exploring the outdoors and meeting friendly people." **WHL**

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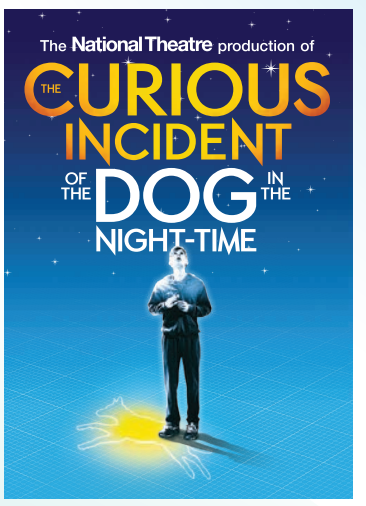

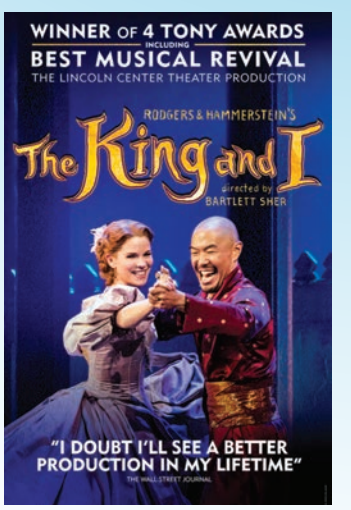

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Photo by Lisa Brisson

Cogsworth (Patrick King) and Belle (Gabrielle Baker) star in "Beauty and the Beast" July 28-31 at Northwest Catholic High School.

Encore!

Summer Arts Festival celebrates 40 years of high-caliber performances

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

This year's staging of "Beauty and the Beast" marks the 40th anniversary of the Summer Arts Festival (SAF), which was conceived as a way to let high school and college-age students to perform in a professional, high-caliber setting.

Haig Shahverdian, former teacher and supervisor of fine and performing arts in the West Hartford Public Schools, had been directing shows in the area and had a "core group of students" who were interested in a summer program.

"At the time, there was no budget and no funding," he recalled. "The parent of one of the students gave his daughter a checkbook and said, 'You can spend $1,500 that I don't want back.' That was the seed money. Then, I went to [the Department of] Leisure Services and asked [if they] would be willing to let us start this program."

The first show SAF performed was the 1947 musical "Finian's Rainbow," chosen because Shahverdian hadn't staged it before.

"I already knew who would audition, so I was looking for a show with certain characters that would allow me to do certain things," he said.

Although SAF now attracts students from Greater Hartford, it was mostly West Hartford residents in its beginning years. Finding students interested in auditioning was easy, Shahverdian said, since he was teaching in town.

Audiences who have seen an SAF show in the last few decades may wonder why "festival" is part of the program's name, given that only one musical is performed, but at its inception, there were three shows going on at once, including plays and a children's show. It proved to be unsustainable, but Shahverdian said it worked well.

"At the time, we had the exact right mix of people who would do it – directors and people who wanted to do straight plays. It lasted for quite a while, but it wasn't possible with the infrastructure we had to sustain it," he said.

After a few years, he went to the schools and looked for support, thinking it would be a collective effort.

"It was to everyone's benefit to collaborate on it. That helped with the budget – we had two contributors to the program," Shahverdian said.

That partnership still exists to this day; SAF is a joint venture between the Board of Education and the Department of Human and Leisure Services.

Robin Collins, who recently retired after managing the Elmwood Community Center for 31 years, oversaw SAF as part of her duties.

"[T]he bosses prior to me ... had this vision of having this cooperative program, which is somewhat unique in that we have the town and Board of Education side working together," she said. "We felt there was a need to have a program for teenagers in our community. ... It was a way to involve the high school- and college-aged [population] in a very good program, a quality program," she said.

SAF's beginnings were homegrown, with the cast and crew doing everything – building and painting sets in someone's driveway, using their own furniture on the stage – "whatever you had to do to make it work," Shahverdian said.

Some of that mindset was never lost, but as things grew, so did the need for outside help. A set painter, lighting designer and other professionals were brought in as productions became more sophisticated.

"We went from homegrown to trying to raise the level of professionalism," Shahverdian said. "With that,

audiences begin to expect more – they're used to it. That's why they come. They know it's more than a typical summer program."

In choosing shows, he said he always looked for those that would attract people of all ages. In its first decade, SAF staged "Hello, Dolly!" "Annie Get Your Gun," "Carousel," "West Side Story," "On the Town," "The Music Man," "Babes in Arms" and "My Fair Lady."

Shahverdian spent the first 20 years of SAF directing the shows, conducting the orchestra, teaching vocals and dressing the set. Upon taking on a new job in town, he stepped down after the 1996 performance and now serves as the festival's executive producer, but he said he's mainly present as a "problem solver, calmer downer [or] someone to bounce off an idea."

This summer, he will direct the orchestra for one performance, which he said has provided him an opportunity to reconnect with the program in a different way.

Looking back over the shows he directed, Shahverdian said he had many favorite memories, but the -second time SAF staged "West Side Story" stands out in his mind.

"In the end, we're all here for the love of the art and the love of the program."

–Sara Demos Avery

"We had such a broad range of actors from Greater Hartford and there were just amazing people. Also, as it turned out, a very diverse group of actors. It was very powerful," he said. "It was one of those where, in the last tension-filled moment where Maria is holding the gun, I wanted to hold on to that moment and not let it go. It was one of those moments where everyone is holding their breath."

Currently, SAF productions hold rehearsals 6-10 p.m. Monday through Friday, allowing cast and crew to have part-time jobs and participate in other summer extracurricular activities. The show comes together in a little over a month.

The company of the 2000 production of "42nd Street" runs lines during rehearsal.

Photo courtesy of Bonnie Mckenzie

This year's production boasts a cast of 57 actors, making it SAF's biggest cast since "Hairspray" in 2012. The cast ranges from incoming high school freshmen to rising college juniors. West Hartford residents make up the majority of the cast, while 19 are from area towns. There is a 10-member stage crew made up of high school students and an orchestra of more than 30 college and high school students.

Current SAF artistic director Sara Demos Avery, who has been in the position since 2010, first got involved with the program as a performer in 1996. The West Hartford resident and Conard High School graduate performed in SAF's productions of "Anything Goes," "42nd Street" and "My Favorite Year" before taking a couple of years off. Avery returned in 2005 to be the stage manager for "Wonderful Town."

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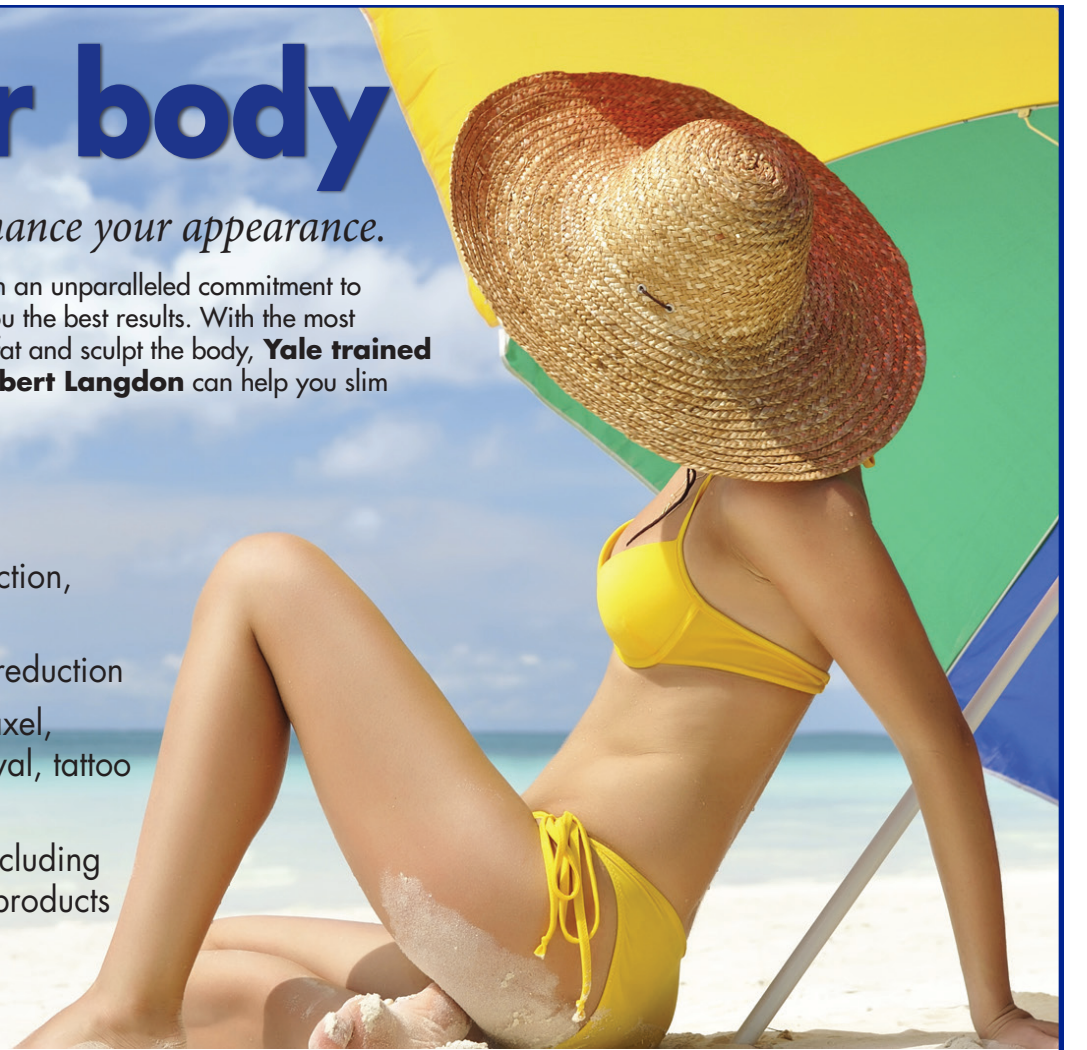

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Photo courtesy of RDK Photography

The 2014 production of "On the Town"

When she heard that the artistic director position would be available, she decided to apply for the position, given that she loved SAF and had built up the theater program at Northwest Catholic High School, where she still works as director of theater.

"The first year, my good friend Marc [Kaplan] and I were co-artistic directors. He already knew how it all worked," Avery said of 2010's production of "Gypsy."

"As time went on, I did it all by myself, and it's been that way ever since," she said.

The team of Avery, music director Emmett Drake, choreographer Kate Morran and festival manager Kate Williamson has been in place since 2007, which she said is key to success in growing the program.

"That's a testament to how important this program is – in the end, we're all here for the love of the art and the love of the program, [along with] the rich history that's involved with it," Avery said. "What we do here is important to who we are as people. I come here because this is my home. SAF has become a home to me, and that's very exciting."

She learned how important the program and its community are to her during a time of personal tragedy. In 2012, the day before rehearsals were supposed to start for "Hairspray," her brother committed suicide, a time that was very difficult for her family.

"We went into the first week of rehearsals and I wasn't there. I had been theater director at Northwest since 2004 and had never been away from a production as much as I was that summer. I learned so, so much about myself, about what this theater means to me and what people are capable of that summer," she said.

Avery remembers coming back to rehearsal and having people say they didn't know how she was able to be there, but she knew that was the best possible place for her to be, surrounded by people she loves.

"That year is the year that I thought to myself, 'This is really what matters – being around people that I care about and contributing in a small way to something bigger than myself,'" she said. "Those things will always be tied in my mind – 'Hairspray,' the message in that show and the people who came together to make that show work while also keeping me afloat in that tough time."

The feeling of support from the SAF community is one mentioned by performers from various generations of the program.

"My best friends to this day, many of them are former SAF kids," said Marron, who met Avery during the 1999 production. "The people before us feel the same way, and the people after us feel the same way. … All of us met here, and when you're a kid, theater is important, but even the hobbyists – camaraderie is paramount. There's camaraderie that's palpable in the audience."

Brigid Lucey, who has been with SAF for six summers, said spending 20 hours a week working on the show is not just an intense rehearsal process.

"You get 20 hours a week to make friends, build memories and foundations for relationships that could last forever," she said. "There's a family to this process. That's part of the reason why I come back every year. I never felt anything so close-bonded as an SAF cast."

Marron said there is a network of former students that "stretches around the world." Many SAF alumni stay in touch, and there are alumni visits to rehearsals three or four times a week.

"It's cool to see all the alumni come back," Lucey said. "I've seen various alumni come back for rehearsals over the last six years. Sara and Kate met doing this, and now they lead the program – it's such a legacy thing. Maybe you age out of the program, but you come back later on. … There's no feeling quite like it. It's a fun thing that everybody feels the same way."

Festival director Williamson said there is a standard of professionalism that Avery, Marron and Drake emphasize, which has been the program's reputation since the beginning.

"One of my favorite things about working behind-the-scenes with people this age [is] they start and feel like they have no clue, but by the end of the production,

The 2011 production of "Thoroughly Modern Millie"

Photo courtesy of RDK Photography

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The 2015 production of "West Side Story"

Photo courtesy of RDK Photography

they're moving set pieces backstage, getting into their costumes and knowing where they have to be and when they have to be there," Williamson said. "In the audience, they're not seeing what's happening in the wings and in the room behind the stage. These kids are the ones making it happen. They learn as much about how to be onstage as they do to be backstage."

Ryan DeFranzo, a five-year SAF veteran who plays the Beast in this summer's production, said there is a professional attitude that permeates the work everyone does, both on and off the stage.

"Everyone is very supportive of each other," he said. "It's a real fun atmosphere, and it makes you want to be a theater person. It makes you want to do better."

Avery and Collins are appreciative that the town continually provides funding for SAF. Collins said the team behind SAF works hard to make sure the program is self-supporting; the Board of Education puts in a contribution every summer, and the rest of the money is raised via program sponsorship, registration fees and ticket sales. SAF has broken even or made money over the last few years.

"It does say something about the town of West Hartford as a whole that, when programs are being slashed everywhere, they're willing to invest so much time, energy and money into a program of this nature," Avery said. "It's absolutely about much, much more than the product, and West Hartford sees that. Any program or school worth its salt knows it's not just about the amount of money you bring in and breaking even."

The continued success of the festival affirms something Shahverdian would say to the town on years where the program lost money.

"We're not just producing a show – we're providing an outlet for people to really work on something collaboratively … plus you're giving people in the community quality entertainment. To continue to provide that outlet requires many hours of dedication, but what you get out of it, you can't measure in money. You measure in relationships," he said.

As his creation celebrates its 40th year, Shahverdian said he wants SAF to go on and continually evolve.

"The fun part is seeing it continue and the excellence, despite all the obstacles. Every year is a struggle and a workaround," he said. "It brings me great joy."

Avery believes that SAF will continue to thrive, especially considering that this summer's cast is half returning students and half new.

"The kids are always going to be there," she said. "I want to give them the opportunity. It's not required, it's not something you need to do for a credit, it's not something your parents wanted you to do. … For this show especially, the exciting thing is this does open up our audiences to a demographic that maybe our previous shows weren't quite right for. Those little kids sitting in the seats, we hope, are the ones who are going to be up on the stage. I know some of these kids saw the show when they were younger and were inspired to join.

"The future of SAF, I hope, is bigger and brighter. What SAF is always going to be is really high-quality theater. It can change all sorts of different things, but what I hope is at the heart of it is kids that really want to be here, kids that recognize the importance of dedication and hard work, and kids that feel welcomed here and work towards something bigger." **WHL**

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Up and running

Groups for all ages share a love of the sport, prepare for events

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

The West Hartford Girls in Power running group encourages young women to give running a try, training them to complete their first road race.

Runner and author John Bingham has said of himself, "The miracle isn't that I finished, it's that I had the courage to start."

Running is something that just about everyone can do. While it's a matter of getting up and moving your legs as fast as you can, there is a lot of mental toughness that goes with the physical action, especially considering that running can be a solitary endeavor. Sometimes it helps to bring along a friend.

Running enthusiasts throughout Greater Hartford have being producing small miracles of their own by introducing the sport to others and helping them take those first daunting strides. Groups for children and adults are popping up and finding their membership growing.

The dominant sound on this warm evening was from the feet of a group of runners as they ran laps on an oval track. One by one, they came to the starting line only to continue on. The cadence their feet created was occasionally interrupted by the shrill of a whistle, an indication it was time to slow their pace. The next tweet of the whistle would tell them to speed up.

"I beat my record, I beat my record," gasped one sweaty boy when he finally came across the finish line. He had just completed eight laps around the track.

Krissy Mok, the whistle wrangler and coach, founded MPower Youth Sports as a way to introduce boys ages 6 to 14 to the sport of running. She is a life-long runner herself and coach for Girls in Stride, a running group training young girls to run a 5K (3.1-mile) road race.

Mok, who lives in Farmington, understands

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A little encouragement helps runners through the The Keane Foundation 5K race.

that running can give an individual sense of confidence, keep them fit and provide some quiet time. She has witnessed the changes it brings to those in her Girls in Stride group. She saw what it did for her son when the two of them ran a 5K together.

"It was the best thing ever for him," she said. "He loved it. I have three boys, I really see the value of it for boys."

Taking what she learned from the girls group, Mok organized a similar group for boys; MPower Youth Sports is now in its third season. It began last spring, with training to run the Celebrate! West Hartford 5K. There was a second session in the fall, training to run the Movember 5K and the third session prepared boys to run the My Sister's Place 5K in June.

Mok has had as many as 30 boys in her group and has noticed that it attracts three different types: athletes who want to stay in shape and build their endurance during their off season, youth who love to run, and "then we have kids – this is the most important sector – kids who want to do a sport but don't feel confident to do a team sport."

The coach creates an environment where the boys do not compete with one another but rather are competing with themselves. Mok hopes all her runners improve over time and have fun, as the runner excited to have beaten his own record demonstrated.

"It makes me feel stronger," runner Ben Bricker, 11, said.

Alex Wang, 14, said he decided to join since basketball season had ended.

"It's very fun," he said. "It's straightforward. You don't focus on a tactic. I let my mind run a lot."

Zach Halstead agreed.

"It's a good thing, to relax and get away from your life for a while."

Ken Bricker said of his son, Ben, "It gives him a sense of satisfaction. I thought it would resonate with him."

When the session first begins, runners start slow and understand it is perfectly fine to walk at first. Eventually they will alternate between walking and running until the time comes when they will be running the entire distance.

Mok has an assistant volunteer coach, Andrew Miller, and several parents – inspired by what their sons are doing – who come to practice and run, too.

"Race day is amazing; it's such a special day," Mok said.

The boys encourage one another all along the route and most stay at the end of the race until the last of the group crosses the finish line.

During the June race, MPower Youth Sports runners all wore orange T-shirts as a way to distinguish themselves from other runners.

It is Mok's goal to build a running community in the Farmington Valley. Practices are held twice a week at Irving Robbins Middle School in Farmington. Her last session drew a few boys from Avon and West Hartford. She is hoping to start a MPower Youth Sports programs in each of those towns this fall.

Runners may find the gear they need at Fleet Feet in West Hartford Center where they will also find a community of runners willing to share their love of the sport.

The store offers two drop-in sessions. On Wednesday evenings, at 6:30 p.m., there is a free Fun Run for all ages. The group runs various routes year-round, ranging from three to five miles, and will shorten and lengthen it as necessary.

"We have leaders that make sure no one gets lost," Stephanie Blozy, Feet Fleet owner, said.

The Wednesday Fun Runs can draw as many as 70 people, she said.

While running is the focus of the event, it is also a time to be social and meet fellow runners. Blozy said that a few couples met because of the group and married.

For those looking to add some cross-training into their regular running routine, Fleet Feet offers speed and strength training sessions on Thursday nights at 6:30 p.m. at the Hall High School track. These events incorporate speed work, bleacher stair climbs and core exercises. They, too, are free.

"It's great for those people who don't like to [just] run, it has some funness to it," Blozy said.

For those new to the sport, Fleet Feet also offers a number of paid training sessions for children, called Zoomerangs, and for those who want to train for everything from a 5K to a marathon.

"It's great; it's social," Blozy said of running with a group. "It's a great way to meet fellow runners."

Runner Lisa Pillow of West Hartford co-founded Girls in Stride with Glenn Marcella in 2010 and has recently expanded the running group to Farmington, Newington and Glastonbury. The group trains girls ages 6 to 14 to run a 5K. In the spring, the girls run the Celebrate! West Hartford 5K and a second session in the fall runs a winter race.

"Initially, we thought of exposing girls to running and we'd reach out to those who may not play a team sport," Pillow said. "We have also reached other girls who play a sport – to build endurance."

Each week the girls meet and run laps as coaches guide them through running concepts such as pacing and form.

"They really benefit from doing their running together," Pillow said.

Each week, the girls also work to meet other people in the group and often will have "homework" to do after practice, such trying to eat one more vegetable or piece of fruit.

The runners also benefit from having the support and encouragement of others in the group.

"We really honor that and try to teach the girls to be supportive of each other and help them through the practice," Pillow said.

Prior to the race, Pillow and her team of coaches will create a mock race so the runners, especially those new to the event, gain an understanding of what race day will be like – from pinning on race bibs to maneuvering through a water station.

"Running was something that I just loved even in high school," Pillow said. "I'd get up and run before school. It's just a way to clear my head and get ready for the day and it makes you feel good."

She and Marcella both have daughters.

"Our mission is to empower girls, give them a springboard to a lifetime of fitness," Pillow said.

Caitlin Cunningham was introduced to Pillow and Girls in Stride while she worked at Fleet Feet in West Hartford. She had an interest in starting a running group for girls, so when she heard what Pillow had done and learned Newington was interested in starting such a group, she began one that practices at Mill Pond Park. Cunningham, who lives in Simsbury, is now in her fourth season of coaching a Girls in Stride group.

"It's fun," she said.

She also appreciates the support that the other Girls in Stride groups give one another. Coaches will often reach out to others to get ideas and share information about what each group is doing.

Cunningham has been running since high school, including on her cross-country and track teams.

"I was really drawn to the people who liked this team aspect. It was a team and an individual sport. You could push yourself. It came naturally to me. Ever since then, I've been looking for more leadership opportunities in the sport."

More girls have joined the Newington Girls in Stride since its inception and, like its neighboring group in West Hartford, they also ran the Celebrate! race.

"In a lot of sports, running can be a punishment. We want girls to realize that running is fun. It's empowering. We want to set them on a path of a lifetime of fitness," Cunningham said.

"A lot of parents ask us, 'Can my daughter really run a 5K?' Yes, they can; they train for it," Cunningham said, adding that some of the mothers have decided to train for the race, too.

Having a group environment to get started is beneficial.

"Running can seem pretty challenging; it's you and your own mind, but if you have a buddy you can talk while you are doing it, that helps with pacing," Cunningham said. "I think running helps a lot with goal setting. You can set short-term goals, long-term goals – what you want to accomplish, even if it's just running two times a week."

Some runner want to run marathons.

Glastonbury resident Wanda Hodsen ran her first marathon in 2012 and has gone on to compete in more than 20 of the 26.2 mile races since then. While not everyone will decide to try for such a goal, she is hoping to introduce younger people to the sport she said benefitted her greatly. Hodsen, along with Abbie Bushley, coach Girls in Stride in Glastonbury.

"It is such a pleasure and privilege to teach these girls, ages 6 to 11, how to run," she said.

One of her favorite activities is when the runners introduce themselves to someone they might not know.

"We teach them to get to know one another and how running can be a great social sport," Hodsen said. "For me, it's just a way to connect with friends. I did a two-mile run on my own and it's just not the same. I like to run with people. It's a pleasure to share that with these girls."

Joining Hodsen as coach is fellow runner Abbie Bushley, who has also run marathons, half marathons and relays.

"It's a program that emphasizes strength, character and good sportsmanship," she said of what drew her to Girls in Stride. "I think that is something that gets carried over to what they do in school or in any other sport. It's a great place for girls to come together and support each other and have fun."

When the Glastonbury girls participated in West Hartford's Celebrate! 5K, the girls realized they were part of a larger group, Bushley said.

"They all wore their T-shirts. You could see them throughout the entire race," she said.

When the Glastonbury Girls in Stride train, it's possible they may have come across members of the Glastonbury River Runners, another running group for adults.

Its president, Rosemary Hokanson, was a runner in high school; she stopped when her life got busy with work and family. After seeing an ad for a new running group that was starting, she joined the group's Coach to 5K, a nine-week training program that prepares runners to run a 5K. She has been running with the group, which is a Road Runner Club of America certified runners club, ever since.

"It was established in 2008 by a group of runners who enjoyed the camaraderie of running together," she said.

The group has 250 members and hosts a 5K and two-mile road races throughout the year.

Glastonbury River Runners also partner with Fleet Feet to offer a Zoomerang group for children up to age 12, that meets on Sundays.

"We believe our mission is to promote running for persons of all ages and abilities, for health, for camaraderie and obviously for competition," Hokanson said. "I think running in a group really provides the support and encouragement when training for events and for fun."

"We believe our mission is to promote running for persons of all ages and abilities, for health, for camaraderie and obviously for competition."

–Rosemary Hokanson

Typically, the group will organize a run and members meet up at a certain time. Often after their runs they will enjoy each other's company over coffee. Many of those who started with the 5K training program have continued as members, including Hokanson.

While runners make up the core group, they will not turn away those who want to get out and move, and would rather walk.

"We also offer a walking program for those who want to focus on health," Hokanson said.

Members set their own personal goals, but the president said the group as a whole works to be a part of the community. Glastonbury River Runners is a member of the Glastonbury Chamber of Commerce.

Courtesy photo

Members of Girls in Stride running in their first Celebrate! West Hartford 5K.

The group hosts a health fair and proceeds from their road races go back to nonprofit organizations in town.

It is currently working to have Glastonbury named a Running Friendly community from the Road Runners Club of America.

Across the river in Wethersfield, youth are also running.

Barbara Bellas was instrumental in founding the Keane Foundation Running Club after having a conversation with the director of parks and recreation and the health district about childhood obesity.

The obesity issue in Wethersfield is no more or less than the national average, Bellas said, however, she had long had an interest in starting a running group for children and this news seemed like a compelling reason to get a group up – and literally running.

The parks and recreation department assisted in the administration side of things and the health district provided a grant. Bellas, a runner herself, reached out for volunteers for each of the town's five public elementary schools.

Each school now offers a six-week program to train for a 5K. The spring session trains for the Keane Foundation 5K and the fall session trains for the Mikey's Place 5K, a race that Bellas was instrumental in establishing.

"We build up to a 5K," Bellas said. "A lot of kids can't run a 5K in six weeks, but we are OK with a jog-walk. We want to encourage them to build on whatever they have."

Runners are encouraged to set goals for themselves, and it can be something as simple as running the length of the field where training sessions take place, or counting to 20 as you run before you stop and walk, or running to the next tree.

"We try to make it fun," Bellas said.

The program draws students who have never run before as well as those who already participate in sports.

"I really like when it's the non-athletic kids, when this is all they are getting," she said. "It gives them a sense of accomplishment, success."

This spring 233 students participated in the program.

Bellas has noticed that some of the younger runners look up to their older peers who are responsible for such things as setting up water stations and logging the number of laps runners do.

Running with a group is a great motivator and a way to stay accountable.

As Hodsen said, "The great thing about running [is] you might start thinking it's not for you. It can be hard sometimes. The hardest thing is getting out the door. Once you are out there you never feel sorry." **WHL**

Life father, like son ... or daughter

Young police officers follow in the family tradition to protect and serve

by Mark Jahne
LIFE Staff

The West Hartford Police Department has a long history of employing more than one generation of a family to help the community and enforce the law. Several of the young officers on the street today are the latest representatives of that tradition.

Officers Dalton Gallagher, Anthony Miele III, Erich Moylan and Sara Nagle all have fathers who also wore the navy blue uniform. Gallagher and Moylan can also claim grandfathers who served on the force.

They all grew up in households where they learned from the older generation about the pros and cons of a career in law enforcement. Each made his or her own decision to become an officer based upon what they learned around the dinner table, coupled with a strong personal desire to serve and protect.

Gallagher, 25, joined the department a year ago. His father Brian, who enjoyed a lengthy career in Newington for many years before switching to West Hartford, is now a fellow officer. Grandfather Francis Gallagher served in West Hartford from 1958 to 1990, retiring at the rank of detective sergeant.

The youngest Gallagher graduated from Newington High School and furthered his education at Manchester Community College.

He spoke about how his father's experience influenced his career choice, saying, "What did it for me was seeing him come home happy and excited every day. Every day is something different."

Miele joined the department four years ago. He is now a field training officer and member of the SWAT team. His father, also named Anthony, served many years in the department and rose to the rank of lieutenant before retiring.

Miele, 27, remembers listening to his father talk about police work at family functions. That, along with the experiences he gleaned from two uncles who were officers in Hartford and Manchester, inspired him to think about a career in law enforcement at an early age.

He earned a degree in economics from the University of Connecticut.

Moylan, 30, waited awhile before making his decision. His father, Rick, and grandfather, Robert, both retired from careers with WHPD. He joked that everyone kept asking him why he didn't apply. He made the decision nine months ago.

"My dad's retired for 10 years. As a kid, I didn't really want to be a cop," Moylan said.

He worked in the family restaurant business in Farmington and also had a job performing building maintenance at the West Hartford police station. As he watched that life unfold around him, his interest grew.

Moylan recently completed the final phase of his training and moved up from a probationary to fully sworn officer. He was educated at the local branch of the University of Connecticut as well as at Tunxis Community College.

One of the most unusual things he said he experienced was during his seventh week of training: attending an autopsy at the office of the chief state medical examiner.

Nagle, 24, said she was influenced by her father, Tom, a veteran officer still with the department. She is currently assigned as a bicycle officer within the community relations division and loves patrolling the town on two wheels. She finds satisfaction in helping people in times of need.

"Everything about this job is really great ... every day, it's different," she said.

Nagle earned a criminal justice degree from Stonehill College and is now pursuing a master's degree at UConn. She has four years with the WHPD.

Photo by Mark Jahne

Multi-generation members of the West Hartford Police Department include, from left, Dalton Gallagher, Anthony Miele III, Erich Moylan and Sara Nagle.

These four officers were interviewed less than a week following police-involved shootings of two African-American men in Louisiana and Minnesota and two days before five Dallas police officers were slain by a sniper who injured another seven.

They spoke about how policing has changed in a world of social media and 24-hour news coverage. They agreed that wearing the uniform means being under the microscope and noted that they have lived this experience since they joined the department.

The others nodded when Nagle said she often sees people on the periphery of her work recording her interactions with the public on their smart phones.

"When I first came on, that's when the first cameras in the cars were there," she said.

Miele said there is a perception on the part of some people that the police are out to inconvenience, perhaps even harm them, and it can be difficult to convince them otherwise.

"The person assumes right away that you're wrong. You're overcoming that right off the bat. The lack of understanding [of what police do] is frustrating," he said.

"The process is lengthy, it's competitive. Only 5 percent make it through the background process."

–Police Chief Tracey Gove

"As long as you're doing the right thing, you shouldn't have to worry about it," Moylan added.

Police Chief Tracey Gove is pleased that the tradition of police work in West Hartford continues to appeal to the next generation.

"We think it's great to have that history and tradition here," he said. "They come in with very good expectations of what the job is and what the job is not."

But that doesn't mean these four officers, or anyone else in the department, gets a free pass. They still have to go through all of the processes required of any candidate who wants to wear a West Hartford badge.

"The process is lengthy, it's competitive. Only 5 percent make it through the background process," Gove said.

That includes submitting to a polygraph test. Candidates must also pass written and physical examinations, and successfully complete 22 weeks of training at the Connecticut Police Academy in Meriden.

They must then pass the final test, riding on patrol with a seasoned field training officer. Only then can they become full-fledged officers with all the rights and authority granted to them by the town and state.

It takes approximately a year from the time a provisional police officer is hired to when he or she advances from probationary status to become a fully sworn member of the department. The town pays for the training.

"Everyone who is qualified [and] who can pass our background [check] gets hired," Assistant Chief Robert McCue said. "It's a demanding job and there's a certain skill set they have to have."

McCue – a third-generation WHPD member himself – said it's one thing for a new officer to be told he or she will be working nights, the overnight shift or on holidays. It's another to actually experience it.

Officers who grew up with fathers who missed holidays and school plays and soccer games because they had to work have a better understanding of that than most other candidates, McCue and Gove said. They also know well that being a police officer in real life does not resemble how it is often portrayed on television or in the movies.

Even though they are just getting started in their careers, Gove praised these four officers for their already proven ability to touch people's lives and help them in positive ways.

Officers hired in recent years must serve the town for 25 years to retire with full benefits; the threshold used to be 20 years. **WHL**

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Photos by Lynn Woike

Hartford Stitch owner Laura Kasowitz considers herself a jack-of-all-trades sewist. In addition to all the accessories in the studio and the dress she is wearing, she's made quilts, totes, napkins, placemats, table runners, curtains, pillows, slipcovers, baby clothes, and Thanksgiving outfits, Christmas pajamas and Halloween costumes.

Reviving a lost art

Laura Kasowitz opens sewing studio on Park Road

by Lynn Woike
Editor

"It's amazing how many people in my generation don't know how to sew on a button or hem a pair of pants," Laura Kasowitz said.

The West Hartford resident and mother of two started sewing "at a really young age," using her mother's old machine and helping herself to a box of fabric.

"I remember making pillows. I remember making a skirt with my mom."

Except for some instruction in the high school family and consumer sciences class, "I was very much self-taught," she said.

She made her homecoming dress in high school, and then took her sewing machine to college where she made curtains for her dorm room. She also made Halloween costumes, quilts and a few garments.

"After college, I got serious about learning the right way to do it. I fine-tuned those skills," Kasowitz said.

Now, she has a studio where she can teach those skills to others.

In June 2015, Kasowitz began Hartford Stitch with a partner, a friend "who also really loved fabric and sewing and our idea was to, down the road, have a fabric store that taught classes. But, in the mean time, we were going to do an online fabric store and private classes."

Competition made the online fabric business difficult, and that was what her friend most liked, so Kasowitz continued on alone, turning her focus to teaching at private parties and home events.

A post she made on the Neighbors and Friends in West Hartford Facebook page the day she opened drew an invitation from Karla Kress-Boyle of Imagine Studio, a creative and performing arts studio on South Street, to hold classes in the space.

"That was a game changer," said Kasowitz, who was trying to put together a new business plan. "She'd reached out to me when I first opened and gave us a home … for a year to figure it out. … From there, it was word of mouth, it was social media, and little by little, getting my name out there," Kasowitz said.

She partnered with local businesses, including Imagine Studio and Blaze and Bloom, to hold Sip and Sews, creating a project with a theme reflecting the host. All the prepping was done beforehand, from cutting fabric to threading the machine, leaving just "the fun stuff, which is the stitching" for attendees.

By renting space at Imagine Studio, some of her first clients were also clients of the studio.

Kasowitz would bring folding tables, machines and a case of supplies to the studio one, two and sometimes three nights a week, setting up the folding tables and taking the machines out of their cases and setting them up, teaching, then taking down everything, packing up and transporting back home.

"It was wonderful for what it was, but I got very tired of it," she said.

Early this year, she said,

"I knew I wanted to have my own space, but everywhere I looked was either too big – I certainly don't need a whole ton of space – and West Hartford rental real estate is a premium, which it should be, but it really didn't fit into my budget. So, I was getting really frustrated and I was walking down Park Road one day in February because I knew this was the neighborhood I really wanted to be in.

"I'd called about another space, and again, it wasn't going to work for me, and I actually stopped in front of this building, which is a three-story former house, and I thought, 'There's no way a travel agency and an insurance business takes up the entire thing, so how do you get on the second floor. Do they have offices? Does somebody live there?'

"It was a passing thought, but I kept going. And then, that night, I was driving to a 101 class at Imagine Studio and I decided … I was trying to make something work that couldn't, and was stressing myself out, and that someday, somebody would walk into my class and say, 'I own a building on Park Road and do you want to rent the second floor?' That's when I would know that this was meant to be. Until then, I was really good where I was. I was really lucky to have that space.

"About half an hour later, a student walked in and looked around and said, 'Is this where you teach?' and I said, 'Yeah.' And she looked around again and she said, 'Well, I own a building on Park Road. Do you want to rent the second floor?'

"I kind of just stared at her, might have even cried a little, because it was so verbatim with what had been going on in my head. It was just so weird."

What made it even more surreal was that the building offered was the same one she had stood in front of and wondered about earlier.

Kasowitz opened her studio there in June: two small rooms, one with seven windows and five sewing machines, and the other with fabric, supplies, and surfaces for cutting and pressing.

"This location is wonderful. Parking is easy," she said.

Now that she has space in what is becoming an incubator for artistic entrepreneurs, not only is she conducting classes, but she's finding ways to hold events that aren't always for profit, such as a charity sewing circle that made 31 medical rag dolls for Connecticut Children's Medical Center in four hours. They are used to help explain procedures to children.

"Relaxing of the craft, I think, is really helpful. I think people get really scared of the rules. I tell my students who come in, 'I'm not a purist.'"

–Laura Kasowitz

Kasowitz is eager to help establish "a maker community" of people who like to sew and find ways for it to help the greater community.

In addition to private lessons, she holds classes for children ages 8-15, and adults who are 16 and older. There are single-night project classes. A series of classes introduces adults to making garments; it covers how to read a pattern, choose fabric, layout and cutting, seam finishes, basic hemming and other topics.

Participants in the introduction to knits class will make a top in an hour. Other projects include pillowcases, a shirred skirt and a zipper pouch. Materials are provided.

The basic class for adults introduces tools and fabrics while making a drawstring bag, a zipper pouch and a corded pillow cover with a lapped zipper.

A lot of people come because they want to make something.

"They want to create something. There's something so empowering about taking raw materials and make something, … something to wear, to give, to use," Kasowitz said.

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Fabric and sewing notions are available at the studio.

Laura Kasowitz sewed all the accessories that decorate her studio.

Making it makes it more meaningful, and she loves teaching clients, showing them their potential.

"I realized there's a real fear of sewing," she said. "There's a fear of messing up the sewing machine or cutting it wrong," she said, explaining it was her goal to take away that fear and lead them step by step through a project such as a fold-over clutch and a market tote.

To the people who insist, "I can't do that," Kasowitz says, "You can totally do that. It's really simple. It doesn't need to be scary."

Those in the sewing world notice many indicators that sewing's popularity is growing.

"There are new celebrity fabric designers – they are my celebrities, tons of sewing blogs. ... There are huge sewing conferences," she said.

Television shows such as BBC's "The Great British Sewing Bee" in which home sewers take on challenges to become the best, and "Project Runway," in which clothing designers compete for a chance to show a collection during New York Fashion Week, have drawn attention to the craft.

"I get a lot of kids who come in because they love 'Project Runway,' and so they want to make their own clothes now," Kasowitz said.

She is excited by their enthusiasm and "phenomenal, no-holds barred sense of creativity."

Perhaps because she's largely self-taught, Kasowitz is not a stickler about rules.

"Relaxing of the craft, I think, is really helpful. I think people get really scared of the rules. I tell my students who come in, 'I'm not a purist.' When you read books, there's a right way and a wrong way [to sew]. ... I know for years I was doing it totally the wrong way but I was getting it done. So then I learned the right way."

You can learn the rules one by one.

"You don't have to know everything before you sit down at a sewing machine. ... There might be rules, but you can do whatever you want. ... You can take it one at a time."

Stephanie Dominello said, "I started taking Laura's classes after my daughter was born. I am a stay-at-home mom with a boy and a girl, and I just wanted to be able to make my kids' clothes like my mom did for me when I was little. Before staying home, I was an engineer and physics teacher, so sewing, in some way, fulfills my need to measure, design and create. It's also so relaxing and is my 'night out' these days, and it feels so good to make something.

"Laura is fabulous and so patient as a teacher, she is the best."

When Dominello's children are older, she hopes they'll take classes with Kasowitz so that sewing becomes something they can do together.

"I love teaching it. I love imparting the knowledge that I've accumulated over the years. But most of all, I love how empowering sewing is to my students," Kasowitz wrote on her website. "Most students start with a million excuses or warnings to me that they will fail. By the end, they look at their project with awe and pride. They made that. They took raw materials, sewed it together and made a beautiful, functional item.

"That's why Hartford Stitch was founded: to bring the joy of 'making' to everyone. Sewing is fun, it's practical, and it's gratifying." **WHL**

For more information or to schedule a studio visit, contact Hartford Stitch at hartfordstitch.com, 860-785-3093 or laura@hartfordstitch.com.

Five sewing machines share a sunny space on the second floor of 298 Park Road in the Walsh Brothers & Sisters Inc. building.

Photos by Lynn Woike

Lights, camera, action!

Young filmmaker recognized for her work

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Maegan Foisie was excited to bring her camera along and document the last few weeks of her senior year in high school. A lot of memories were being made and she did not want to miss capturing any of them.

In the fall, the West Hartford resident and Watkinson School graduate will head south to begin her freshman year in college at the University of Tampa.

"I am a really nostalgic person," she said. "I like remembering the good times. I am really hoping I'll get my camera to document the summertime."

This will not be Maegan's first fore behind a camera. This past April, one of her short films, "Home Not Home," was honored with a Best Cinematography Award at the

Photo by Alicia B. Smith

Maegan Foisie was the recipient of the Best Cinematography award at this year's Reel Youth Hartford Film Festival.

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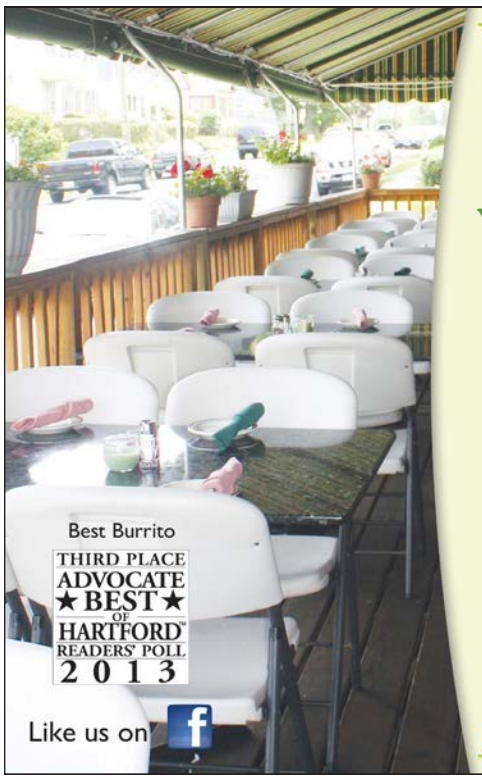

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Reel Youth Hartford Film Festival. The event was held at Cinestudio in Hartford and had more than 20 entries.

Her interest in film began with YouTube and posting short clips she had created. Her early work began with what she called "really stupid music videos."

What she learned from these experiences was that she especially enjoys the editing process.

"When I went to edit it, I realized I had fun [going from] several clips, to one cohesive piece," she said.

Maegan took an interest in her school's creative art program in which she was accepted for film-making. She studied with two mentors – one who assisted with the technical aspects and the other who offered a more artistic approach. She also took a film study class.

One topic she said that appeals to her is looking at "how far removed human beings have come from nature, where they originated from." explaining, "I think there is a lot of value to returning to your home or nature."

Her 5 1/2-minute film tells the story of a boy locked in a building and trying to get out. He appears in black-and-white while shots of nature appear in color.

Her fellow classmate Finn Pryor plays the main character, and Nate Hellmuth created an original score for the film.

Calling her film "expressionist," Maegan said she felt that she feels she can develop it more.

"I definitely think I can build on it, at least from that idea and give it more of a story. It's not really a narrative piece," she said.

"I was pretty excited," she said of the film's premiere at the festival. "I was eager to get up there and claim that trophy."

Cinestudio is an independent film theater located on the campus of Trinity College. According to its website, "The Reel Youth Hartford Film Festival is an opportunity for local students to learn about film-making, express themselves."

The Reel Youth Hartford Film Festival began four years ago and organizer Jacob Aparicio said, "What stands out to me is the creativity of the youth."

The festival was started as a means to give youth an opportunity to express themselves.

"It's about freedom of expression and they've really taken advantage of that," Aparicio said.

Submissions are requested in early April and a jury of local artists and community members view the submissions before selecting award winners.

"I am a sucker for the Marvel movies, especially Captain America."

–Maegan Foisie

"It was a great film," Aparicio said of Foisie's work. "It really stood out."

Although Maegan was aware of the film festival last year, she said she did not feel she had anything ready to enter into the contest and felt more prepared this year. She follows in the footsteps of Brandonlee Cruz and Isaiah Williams Ayala from Watkinson School who captured Best Film in 2014.

The University of Tampa attracted Maegan, of course for the nice weather, but also because it was a non-arts school. She plans on majoring in finance and hopes to earn a minor in filmmaking.

"When I visited it was really nice," she said, adding that she found a number of quiet places to study or just relax.

"I think I'm too young for that commitment," she said of studying at an arts school.

Maegan admires the work of film director Sidney Lumet and Alejandro González Iñárritu, who directed the 2014 movie, "Birdman." She also enjoys classic movies like "Citizen Kane" and "Chinatown."

"I am a sucker for the Marvel movies," she said, "especially Captain America."

When not busy with her film-making, Maegan said she enjoys cooking, running and fishing. **WHL**

View "Home Not Home" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJd9vy52TmQ.

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Curiosity keeps Woody Exley going

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff writer

Woody Exley was not getting a dog. No. No dog.

"I am not a dog person," he said. He did not want the responsibility, did not want to be tied down caring for a dog.

These days he takes Addy, an Australian labradoodle for a daily walk, often at a local reservoir.

"Now the dog is my best friend," Exley said with a smile. "It's a life-changing thing; she is a real joyful dog."

The dog episode is one of many examples throughout Exley's life that illustrate just how things can change, and often for the better.

For instance, Exley studied English at Slippery Rocky State College. He became a journalist. He is a member of Temple Sinai in Newington. Exley is not Jewish.

Whatever life has brought his way, Exley was of the mindset to roll with it and see where it led. At the age of 76, he knows life can unpredictable. He adopted a curious nature years ago that has served him well.

"I just really enjoy life," he said. "I always enjoyed learning new things."

He also credits his wife Barri Marx, saying, she "makes life fun."

Exley grew up in Philadelphia.

While in college he joined the school newspaper.

"That's what did it, I guess," he said of how he went on to pursue a career in journalism.

Although an English degree would serve him well, Exley said he took a book out of library to learn about journalism, including the five W's: who, what, where, when and why. His first job out of school was for a small daily in West Virginia.

Eventually Exley took a job at The Hartford Times and made the move to Connecticut.

He would marry Alma and settle with his family in Enfield. His wife, an educator, also worked in Hartford.

The couple moved to West Hartford in 1981, drawn by the school system.

He would go on to work as a speechwriter at, what was at the time Connecticut General, and is now Cigna, and later at United Technologies.

Now retired, Exley owns his own business, Exley Communications, where he freelances as a speechwriter for CEOs and other executives, creates brochures and dabbles in public relations.

Journalism was likely the perfect fit for Exley who enjoyed the research that often went along with covering stories.

Photo by Alicia B. Smith

Woody Exley loves to learn new things and has never stopped.

LIVING Your Best LIFE

"You learn a lot about many, many things," he said.

Retirement was not about to slow Exley down and has afforded him more time to support several community iniatatives.

Among them is the Alma Exley Scholarship Program.

Named in honor of his first wife, who passed away from breast cancer in 1995 at the age of 52, the program offers scholarships to people of color pursuing a degree in education.

According to the scholarship's website, the program was established to "increase diversity and promote excellence in the teaching profession. We are pursuing these goals by aiding and recognizing students of color who demonstrate outstanding potential and strong dedication to classroom teaching."

Alma Exley had worked as a teacher, for the state Department of Education and served on Enfield's school board.

"That's been extremely rewarding," Exley said of the scholarship program, which is managed by the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain.

Since its inception, Exley said the program has created a network of past recipients, many of whom attend the annual scholarship presentation reception held at the Mark Twain House in Hartford.

"It's carrying on her work," he said of Alma Exley. "She was dedicated to that cause. It's great to remember her that way and carry on her work in education."

"It's bittersweet," Exley said. "These recipients would have loved her so much and she'd love them."

Exley also sits on two boards including that of Democracy Works, a non-profit organization that works with those convicted of felonies to restore their voting rights after their incarceration.

He also serves on the board of Community Partners in Action, an organization that helps those who have been incarcerated to return to society once released from prison.

Exley also volunteers with Literacy Volunteers in Hartford, which helps teach English to immigrants.

"That's a great program," he said.

"If I can't find it in West Hartford Center I don't need it."

–Woody Exley

For some time, he volunteered with hospice after the organization had been so helpful during the time of his wife's illness.

Following his second marriage, Exley joined Temple Sinai as his wife is Jewish. There he serves as the temple's publicity volunteer and was instrumental in helping the temple celebrate its 60th anniversary. Always looking to learn new things, Exley took a course in Reform Judaism to help him better understand his new community.

"Temple Sinai of Newington is a different kind of synagogue in that many of its members, like me, are not Jewish. And the congregation includes a number of non-traditional families," he said.

"I enjoy learning from Rabbi Jeffrey Bennett, who encourages questions and discussion," Exley continued. "And I like practicing my rudimentary German with him, since he is fluent in German as well as Yiddish, of course."

Learning German is something that Exely has recently taken up, inspired by his interest in genealogy. As he began to research his family history, Exley learned that he is not the first in his family to "immigrate" to Connecticut from Philadelphia, as his great-great-grandparents had done so before him in the 1860s.

"I get a big kick out of that, tracking down my ancestors," he said. His grandparents settled in Meriden and are buried there. Following research in a city directory Exley was able to locate the gravestone of his relations and said it was a bit of a shock to see his name on the stone.

He took up the language as he thought it would help him with his research and to perhaps one day visit the cities where they had lived.

"And it's mental stimulation," he said.

Marx surprised him with German lessons from a tutor for his birthday and he has discovered apps that assist, too. Exley also took a course with the West Hartford Adult Education program.

Among his hobbies are gardening and his book club, which began in 1985. As many as 10 men have been gathering monthly to share their enjoyment of fiction. Through the years Exley estimates the group has read 300 books. He joked the group began before book clubs were "cool."

Another long-standing tradition Exley has kept is a weekly breakfast meeting with friends at Sally and Bob's on North Main Street for the past 20 years.

"It's a highlight of the week," he said.

Trips to West Hartford Center are common for Exley.

"If I can't find it in West Hartford Center I don't need it," Exley joked.

For many years, he referred to the public parking lot off of Farmington Avenue as "Woody's World," because he spent so much time there - at the fitness center, the coffee shop and a restaurant.

Exley continues his exercise regiment these days. In addition to the dog walks he takes, he is an avid Pilates student working out at Pilates-Defined. It's a discipline that his wife Marx introduced him to.

"I love that," Exley said of Pilates. "It keeps me going." **WHL**

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LIVING Your Best **LIFE**

Photo by Lynn Woike

Moving to the music

90th birthday does not stop Mary Dougherty from dancing

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Dancing feels good, and Mary Dougherty credits it with for keeping her active and feeling younger than her 90 years.

Sometimes, she said, when she's not feeling her best, she relies on a push from Clemens Lengenfelder, her instructor and Fred Astaire Dance Studio West Hartford owner, to get moving.

"But then, the fact that when you're moving, the plain physicality of it, it works [the pain] out of you. It feels good – and I'm a person with arthritis."

When you're doing it right, she said, your body moves with the music, and the dance blends together.

"That's a great feeling. It keeps me young, and there is a mental challenge to it, yes. You've got to keep focused because he's leading. So, you've got to be focused on what you're doing. If you start daydreaming, you're not going to be feeling the rhythm."

Samba – while it's getting to be a bit fast for her – has always been her favorite. She also likes rumba, bolero and West Coast swing.

"Even though I love to waltz and tango, with rhythm dance, really, you come alive," Dougherty said.

Lengenfelder agreed, saying, "If you put on a song with a strong beat, she's bouncing away. It's quite fun. She does not fit the stereotype mold of an older lady. Absolutely not. She pretends that she's 25."

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LIVING Your Best LIFE

Fred Astaire Dance Studio West Hartford owner Clemens Lengenfelder leads Mary Dougherty around the dance floor.

Dougherty started dancing at the age of 6, taking lessons for a year. It wasn't until she was 65 that she took her next lesson.

"My daughter came here and took a few lessons and she said, 'You'd love it. Why don't you try it?' and I've been here ever since. I've been here 25 years."

That makes her one of the oldest and the longest customers predating Lengenfelder at the studio that is now on South Street.

Together they've done more than 25 showcases – think ballroom dance recital for adults, the student and the teacher alone on the floor, performing a choreographed number.

Showcases are part of the Fred Astaire system, used to take students to the next level, and make dreams come true.

"If they've always wanted to be a Roxanne or Sandy from 'Grease' or always wanted to do a tango, this is the chance to be that character with that dance," Lengenfelder said.

Dougherty always attends the Friday night dance and takes one or two 45-minute private lessons a week – sometimes more when she's preparing for a showcase or a competition.

She has competed in three-day regional and weeklong national competitions and has trophies from wins in her age group and ability level.

"People tell me, 'You're different when you perform,'" Dougherty said.

"I've met some really nice people here," she said, adding that many of her friends "are not around any longer" and those who are aren't dancing.

Because they share a love of dance, the difference in age does not matter, and Friday nights turn into a social hangout.

She's part of a group of about eight friends – from 50 to 90 – all who live in West Hartford. Together they dine out, celebrate each other's occasions and support one another.

In addition to dance, Dougherty goes to the gym at least twice a week and dabbles in art. She's taken classes in oils, acrylics, watercolors and, most recently, collage.

"Now, I'm into collage," she said. "You're completely free to do anything you want. It just has to suit your sensibilities."

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LIVING Your Best LIFE

Some of her mixed media pieces she called "really weird," and explained that when she starts with an idea, it evolves on its own. "I put things together that never should be together. A lot of it goes abstract," she said.

Explaining why she took up dance and art, Dougherty said, "I needed to do something that I enjoyed doing. ... It's good to have these things that you love to do, and be able to do them."

Both she and Lengenfelder insist, "It's all in the attitude."

"You can't focus on the pain," she said. "I have plenty of that. I have things to do. It keeps my mind going all the time. ... You've got to be open to new things, and you've got to appreciate the moment. If you have a beautiful day, you appreciate the beautiful day."

Dougherty had wanted to attend art school after high school, but on her mother's urging, got a teaching certificate from the then Teachers College of Connecticut and taught elementary school in Hartford. She left to raise her family, and when her youngest was 2, she began teaching English as a second language to adults in night school before going back to teaching in Hartford until she retired.

"You can't focus on the pain. I have plenty of that. I have things to do."

–Mary Dougherty

"If there's something in life you've always wanted to do, just do it. It's never too late," Lengenfelder said, using Dougherty as an example.

He said, "She's the living proof that you're only as limited as your mind" and serves as an inspiration to other students who say, "I want to be like Mary when I grow up." WHL

Photos by Lynn Woike

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When Astronaut Village was built, it was known as West Park, and much of the area that is now Westfarms mall was a driving range.

Photo by Lynn Woike

Astronaut Village

Small community enjoys its own orbit amid malls

by Lynn Woike
Editor

The subdivision called West Park has come to be known as Astronaut Village because the streets are named for such NASA legends as John Glenn, Gus Grissom and Alan Shepard. It is surrounded by shopping malls with chain stores and big box retailers.

Approved in 1967 by the Town Council, the development in the southwest corner of town "is a bit of an island because there's only one way in and one way out," said village resident and former Councilman Bernie Jacques.

Calling the neighborhood "unconnected," Jacques explained, "It's nice. It's quiet. It's isolated in a positive sense. It's entirely unto itself. ... You can walk to other neighborhoods, but you can't drive."

He went on to say, "It's very quiet, although it's becoming less and less so" as mall traffic has increased. Yet, with the development's elevation a little lower than the street, "you don't have a sense there's a big mall there."

The mall opened in 1974.

Shepard Road, off New Britain Avenue, is the only way in or out, making the neighborhood with its six other roads isolated. Built below street level makes it quiet. Clover and Timothy drives are just to the north, but they are not a part of the neighborhood. To the south is Newington's Cherry Hill Drive, which has no outlet on New Britain Avenue.

"It's one of those neighborhoods that isn't as well-known," Robin Gebrian of William Raveis Real Estate said of Astronaut Village, adding, "It's very convenient to everything. Your kids can walk to a fabulous school. You can walk to the park."

It has a "nice variety of houses for families and retirees," from $200,000 ranches with two bedrooms, a bath and a half and a one-car garage to $400,000 Colonials and split levels with four bedrooms, two and a half baths and a two-car garage.

"It's popular," Gebrian said, recalling a ranch she listed that got three offers the day it went on the market, and a raised ranch with multiple offers that sold in four days.

Jacques said that despite it's small size, the neighborhood "is extremely diverse – ethnically and economically."

Margaret Del Vecchio lives in a ranch house on Grissom Drive and is one of the original residents who remain.

"I built the house here because it was an area I wanted to live in, convenient to work," she said. "One by one, people moved in. I was one of the last houses that was built."

Photo courtesy of Marsha Lotstein, published in "Jewish West Hartford: From City to Suburb" by Betty N. Hoffman

Seth and Debbie Lotstein play in the yard of a neighbor in the early days of Astronaut Village.

Seymour Sard, a retired developer, said a real estate management firm brought him the proposal and together they developed the property.

"After I put in the roads, I sold it to the LaCava brothers in Wethersfield and they built it," Sard said.

Del Vecchio called the LaCavas "one of the biggest builders back in the '70s."

Young Lane is one of three short culs-de-sac in Astronaut Village.

A plaque on a rock in the landscaped island of Chaffee Road memorializes Battalion Chief Thomas De Angelis and the others who died on September 11, 2001.

Photos by Lynn Woike

"I also built Proctor Drive. I built Nursery Drive. I built on many, many streets in the north end of West Hartford," Sard said, adding, "I also built all the glass-and-brick office buildings in the center of West Hartford."

Other construction by what was then Seymour H. Sard Inc., now Sard Reality Company LLC, on South Main Street included area schools, hospitals, nursing homes and part of the Hartford Regional Market.

The land upon which Astronaut Village was built was most likely part of the Gerth Dairy Farm, as was the land on which the Corbin's Corner Shopping Center, opening in 1961, was also built. Westfarms was built on farmland that had belonged to the Corbin family.

"It's isolated in a positive sense. It's entirely unto itself. ... You can walk to other neighborhoods, but you can't drive."

–Bernie Jacques

The engineering firm, now no longer in business, chose the street names, Sard said.

The astronauts were John Glenn, Gus Grissom, Alan Shepard, John Young and Roger Chaffee. No record was found of an astronaut with the last name of Burnham.

"They picked those names, so I called it Astronaut Village," Sard said, adding, "I remember they sold the houses very rapidly."

He's been back over the years.

"I've driven through the neighborhood. I've always been impressed with the way the neighborhood looks. They've kept the homes in real good condition. ... It matured very well," Sard said, calling it "a real solid neighborhood."

Initially, when constructed, the end of Shepard Road where it meets with Grissom Drive connected to Greenhouse Boulevard in Newington.

"That resulted in excessive traffic," Jacques said, adding that in 1980, neighbors rallied and the road was blocked off while a pedestrian right-of-way remains.

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Photos by Lynn Wolke

Astronaut Village is a quiet community across from Westfarms mall.

While that was before he moved to Chaffee Lane, he was there when in 1997 when neighbors rallied again, this time to fend off Bristol developer Victor Basile who wanted to purchase their homes, tear them down and build a retail development. No details of the plan were ever revealed.

Basile "needed a healthy chunk, and not a checkerboard" of homeowners willing to sell, Jacques said.

The process – which extended for several months and included public meetings, a petition drive and protest postcards – "created a great deal of uncertainty," he said.

By the time Basile dropped his bid, neighbors had united and opposition was strong, Jacques said. The developer later purchased about a dozen homes in New Britain that were razed to build the Target store.

Jacques recalled another time the neighborhood coming together. It was about a year after terrorist attack on September 11, 2001.

"My wife's brother, Thomas DeAngelis, was one of the firefighters [who died] in 9/11 and there'a a memorial on Chaffee Road," he said, describing a stone in the cul-de-sac that was dedicated to the chief of Battalion 8.

"Several hundred people attended a memorial service," he said, including most of the neighborhood. "We closed the street." **WHL**

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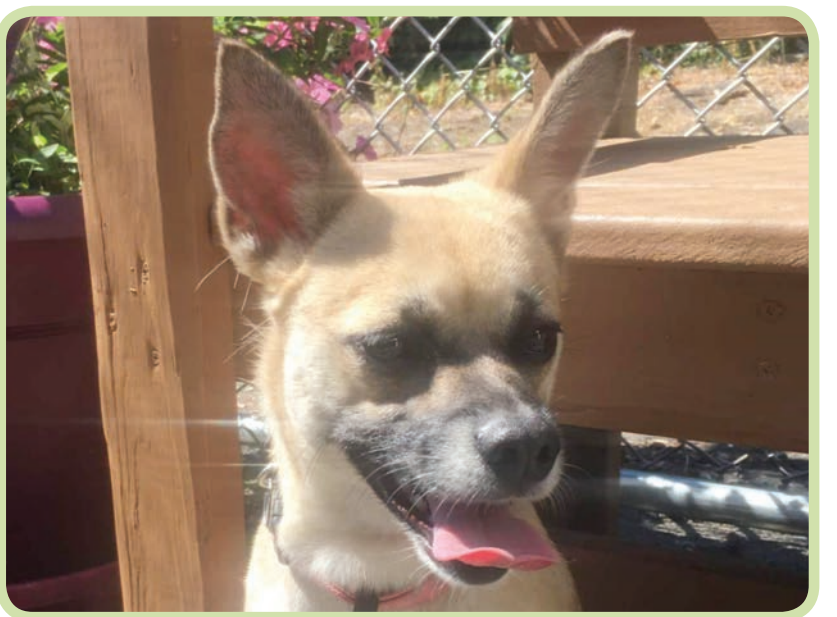

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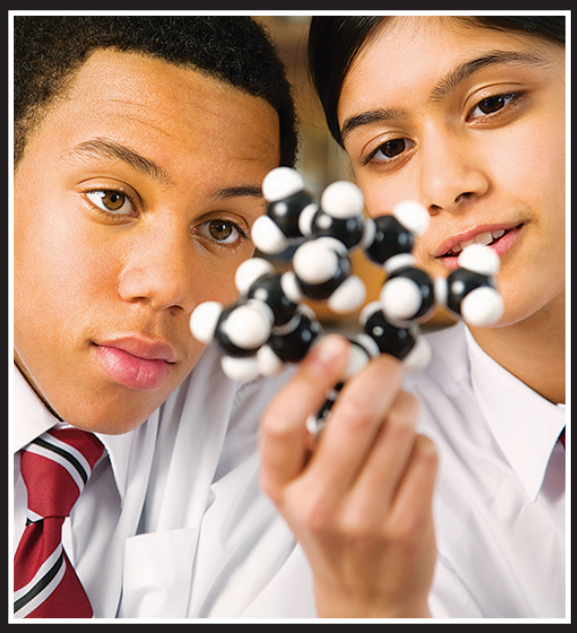

SCHOOL

August 2016

A unique offering

Area high school courses go beyond math and history

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

There are classes offered and taken at nearly every high school in the country – English, history, science, and algebra...but with a diversifying student population, many schools, including schools throughout Connecticut, are taking the opportunity to offer a variety of unique courses.

At Hall High School in West Hartford, many of those core subjects now have specialized classes for upperclassmen to explore.

"In our English classes, we are offering women's literature, with one course called 'Breaking the Silence,' which is classical feminist, and one that's new this year called 'Redefining the Roles,' which provides an evolutionary study of the roles of women in society," Hall High School Assistant Principal John Guidry said. "We also offer history of modern Warfare, which many students really adore."

New this coming year at Hall High School will also be an addition to the school's foreign language department classes in American Sign Language.

"They'll be not only learning the language, but exploring the

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American Deaf culture and history," Guidry said.

According to Guidry, there has been a push to include ASL as a foreign language at the school for several years, both at the administrative and student level.

"We have rich resources right here in West Hartford," he said. "You see increasingly in the world that that is considered to be a bonafide foreign language."

The language will be open to students in grades nine through 12 in what Guidry said will be an immersive experience with a new teacher who is part of the deaf community. Close to 50 students have already registered for the course for the coming year.

"The students are clamoring for it," Guidry said.

This offering is especially exciting for Guidry because he said it opens opportunities for students to learn not just a language but an entire culture to which they may not have been previously exposed.

"The deaf community is a subculture that exists among us in every location. There are other types of subcultures, but most of them tend to be somewhat geographically restricted. The deaf subculture is not," he said. "It's my personal opinion that it's a subculture that flies below the radar, and people often don't think about it as a subculture."

In addition to exposing students to new cultures, other unique classes in the area are aimed at exposing students to new skills. Simsbury High School will be offering a new course this coming year on fashion design.

"We've piloted this in the summer arts program where students are actually making dresses and other clothing, and it's been very successful," Simsbury High School Principal Andrew O'Brien said.

After seeing what he called a "groundswell of interest" from the summer program, O'Brien said the course was further developed as an elective for students at the high school.

"Along with learning the actual fashion design, they get to learn about the industry and the use of different materials," he said.

"For one project, students would choose a celebrity and they would research their style, their body type, all that, then, ultimately, they created these outfits."

In addition to teaching students about a previously unexplored area, O'Brien said this class also gives them the opportunity to be creative.

"We had one girl who made an outfit entirely out of Starburst wrappers that were all braided together," he said.

While the summer program primarily focused on women's fashion, the course at the high school will branch into menswear as well.

"It's not only an interesting course for students, but it's a marketable skill as well," O'Brien said.

Providing those marketable skills is a large piece of the push behind courses at Newington High School as well. There, the culinary program has expanded to provide students with real-world kitchen and restaurant experience.

"This is not Home Ec. This is a restaurant atmosphere with catering services," culinary teacher Scott Pestka said. "I teach the kids how to

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smoke their own meat. ...That kind of stuff isn't taught in Home Ec."

The program is part of Newington High School's Culinary Arts Academy, which will be entering its third year this fall. The academy offers courses ranging from Introduction to Cooking to Event Planning to Restaurant Management.

In addition to learning in the classroom, students in these courses get hands-on experience in the food service industry, as the class doubles as a catering service for both school members and the community at large.

Students create daily sandwiches and baked goods that are available for teachers and fellow students to buy as well as working a catering event two to three times per month. In the spring, the culinary students catered the State of the Town dinner as well as the high school football team's banquet with more than 150 people.

As the culinary teacher, Pestka runs his classroom like a restaurant kitchen and demands only the highest quality.

In each of the unique classes offered, it is new cultures and new skills that are the focus of learning:

"It's about exposing them to something new, and our kids our thriving."

– Andrew O'Brien

"I always tell the kids, we have to sell quality. There will be times where I look at it and it doesn't look perfect, and they'll take them all apart and redo their chef salad because I wasn't going to sell poor quality," Pestka said. "I'll put my wraps and salads up against anybody any day."

He credits much of the success of the culinary program with the facilities they are able to use, including industrial refrigerators, smokers and ovens.

In Rocky Hill, having the best facilities is possible through a multi-year renovation that has been happening at the high school. One of the most popular classes at Rocky Hill High School is photography.

"We still run it in the traditional sense of the word," Principal Mario Almeida said.

The school has had a dark room for photography and ensured that the space would not be lost in the renovation.

"This year, we have a brand new dark room," Almeida said. "When the

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Back to School

school was renovating, we decided it was important enough to make sure it was included."

Almeida said photography remains one of the most popular electives and regularly fills up.

Despite changes in technology, Almeida, and many students with whom he has spoken, has said understanding film development at its basic form is crucial to understanding photography in general.

"I think our students today are so caught up with modern day technology, with Photoshop and digital media, that I think it's important to understand how black and white film development works," he said.

"Many times we thought of changing it to more of a modern, digital photography, but even the kids will tell you that understanding the black and white photography helps them with their digital work."

Through the class, many students have come to find a passion for traditional photography and shown a great deal of talent in the medium, Almedia said.

"One of the units they do is portraits, and they learn how the right background, the right light, the right shading, all of it makes for a better photo," he said. "It's very different than taking a picture with a digital camera and being able to alter it all after."

In each of the unique classes offered, it is new cultures and new skills that are the focus of learning.

"It's about exposing them to something new," O'Brien said, "and our kids our thriving." **WHL**

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Help kids get ready for fall sports season

Summer is a season of relaxation, especially for school-aged children who are not yet old enough to work. Such youngsters no doubt enjoy the chance to spend summer days lounging poolside or at the beach, all without a care in the world or any homework to complete.

Though summer is synonymous with R&R, parents of young athletes who hope to compete in scholastic athletics when the school year begins in autumn may need to take steps to ensure their kids aren't at risk of injury once the curtain comes up on fall sports season.

Examine and replace equipment if necessary. The right equipment can protect kids from injury and help them realize their full athletic potential. But damaged or outdated equipment can increase kids' risk of injury. Examine kids' equipment long before fall sports season begins so you have time to bargain hunt should anything need to be replaced.

Schedule a physical for your child. Many school districts mandate that athletes receive and pass physicals before they can compete. Speak with the athletic director at your child's school to learn the guidelines that govern athletic physicals. The physical will need to be conducted by a predetermined date, but you may also need the physical to be conducted after a certain date for it to be considered valid. Speak with your child's physician if any problems are found during the physical.

Let kids heal. Kids' schedules are busier than ever before, and many youngsters play several sports during the school year. Summer vacation may be the only extended period all year that youngsters' bodies get to heal. While it's important that kids stay physically active throughout the summer, make sure they don't overdo it, as you should emphasize the importance of rest.

Gradually get back in the swing of things. While rest gives kids' bodies a chance to heal and develop, it's important that young athletes stay in shape over the summer. As the fall sports season draws near, help kids gradually get back in the swing of things. Tryouts tend to be physically demanding, so kids who have not lifted a finger all summer may be at risk of injury or missing the cut. Let kids ease back into regular exercise to make sure they are not starting from scratch come their first tryout.

Speak with coaches. Coaches can be great assets to parents who want to make sure their youngsters enjoy the summer without sacrificing their chances of making the team in the fall. Speak with kids' coaches to determine if there is any area your son or daughter can work on over the summer to improve his or her chances of making the team. Make sure kids are the ones leading the charge to improve their games; otherwise, they may feel pressured into doing so and that can take away the fun of playing sports.

Scholastic athletes should take advantage of the opportunity to relax and recover that summer presents.

But, athletes who hope to compete in the fall can still work with their parents to ensure they're ready once the school year and sports season begins. **WHL**

How families can cut screen time

No matter where you look, screens are everywhere. The proliferation of easily portable tablets and smartphones means many people, adults and children alike, are never too far from the nearest screen.

While that accessibility has dramatically changed the way many people live their lives, excessive exposure to screen time can produce a host of unwanted side effects.

Steven Gortmaker, a professor of the practice of health sociology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, has studied the negative effects of excessive screen time on children since the 1980s. According to Gortmaker, such effects include higher rates of obesity among kids who watch too much television and difficulty sleeping among youngsters with access to small screens, such as the screens of smartphones.

In addition, a 2012 study published in the journal Psychiatry Research linked screen time with impaired cognitive function in young males.

But, adults are not immune to the effects of excessive screen time, either. Spending significant time being sedentary and staring at screens can increase adults' risk for cardiovascular disease.

An Australian study published in the December 2012 issue of the British Journal of Sports Medicine found that, compared with persons who watch no television, those who spend a lifetime average of six hours per day watching television can expect to live 4.8 fewer years.

So what can families do to cut back on their screen time? While it likely won't be easy to put down smartphones and tablets and turn off laptops and televisions, the following are a handful of ways for families to spend less time staring at screens.

Remove televisions from bedrooms. Parents may find it impossible to gauge, much less control, how much time their kids spend watching television when youngsters have TVs in their bedrooms. Though this will likely be met with considerable resistance, remove televisions from bedrooms in your home.

Set a positive example for kids by removing your own bedroom television as well. Come kids' bedtimes, make sure all devices, including smartphones and tablets, are left in common areas of the home rather than bedrooms so kids are not tempted to watch videos instead of falling asleep.

Institute a "no screens" rule during meals. Many parents grew up in households that did not allow televisions to be on during meals, and while the times might have changed with respect to the technology, similar rules can still prevail today. A "no screens" rule during meals gives parents and their kids time to catch up, bond and foster stronger relationships.

Do not use the television for background noise. Turn the television off when it's serving as just background noise. If you need background noise, turn on some music instead.

Log screen time. Logging screen time for each member of the family can provide an estimate of just how much time the whole family spends staring at screens. Encourage each member of the family to spend as much time being physically active as he or she spends staring at screens. Set goals for each member of the family to reduce their screen time, even rewarding those who reach their goals.

Reducing screen time can improve overall health and help family members reconnect with one another. **WHL**

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Preparing for a *multicultural* world

Students offered more options when studying world language

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

In an increasingly multicultural world, it's important for students to be given the opportunity to learn another language – or two – at school.

Students are often able to choose from a variety of options, with some districts offering five or more languages.

Simsbury offers classes in Chinese, French, Latin or Spanish. West Hartford currently teaches five and will be adding a sixth – American Sign Language – in the fall.

Newington provides students with a choice between Spanish, Italian and French, with Wethersfield providing the same options.

Glastonbury offers six – Spanish, Russian, French, Chinese, Latin and Greek. Rocky Hill students can learn French, Latin, Italian or Spanish.

Spanish and French remain popular offerings in most districts. Erin Murray, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning in Simsbury, said students in her district select a language in seventh grade after they all begin with Spanish in fifth grade.

West Hartford world language coordinators Elena Sada and Lucy Cartland said the popularity of Spanish is evident due to the fact that it is the predominant second language in the United States.

"In West Hartford, like in most regions of the country, Spanish is the most widely-spoken language among bilingual and multilingual populations and is the language of the largest percentage of West Hartford immigrants," Sada wrote in an email.

Spanish is the most popular language at Newington High School, according to Rossanna Vassal, coordinator of world language for Newington Public Schools. It is the only language offered in middle school, so most students will continue to study it once they move on to high school. It is the only language in which students will be able to take an Advanced Placement class.

"Many of our students – and parents – will argue that Spanish will be the most useful language to learn," she said.

Rita Oleksak, director of foreign language for Glastonbury Public

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Schools, said Spanish remains the most popular of the six languages offered "by sheer number of students."

Wethersfield students can start studying a world language beginning in seventh grade. Sally Dastoli, director of curriculum and instruction for Wethersfield Public Schools, said Spanish is what most students opt to take.

Many districts are noticing an increase in the number of students choosing to take French.

"French has slowly crept up on Spanish," Murray said. "Some other school districts are eliminating those two languages; we have added teachers and sections."

She believes the growing number of students who choose French is due to the fact that a few years ago, Simsbury offered full-year French to seventh-graders, which was not the case for several years prior; they could take a full year only in grade eight.

"It was very difficult for students to change languages between grade seven and eight, and typically made the change when they arrived at SHS," Murray said. "Therefore, with full year choices made available in grade seven, we are seeing a larger enrollment in French."

Sada and Cartland said French-speaking markets account for five times more business than any other markets, and the largest customer in Connecticut for its products and services is France, followed by Quebec.

"Perhaps our residents are motivated ... by the beauty of French when they choose to study it in our schools," Sada said.

The two most popular languages in Rocky Hill are Spanish and French, according to Kathleen Lessard, world language supervisor at Rocky Hill High School, with the latter on the rise.

"French enrollment has been increasing steadily in the last few years," she said. "As a French teacher in the district, this is very exciting."

With so many districts offering a wider option of languages, Oleksak said it would make sense for enrollment numbers to go down in a certain language, but she is pleased that "French numbers are holding their own."

Some districts in the state and nationwide

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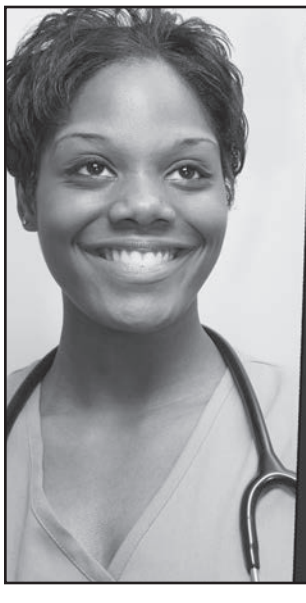

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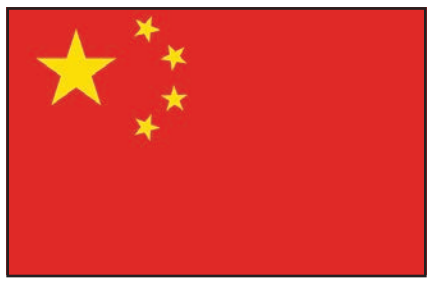
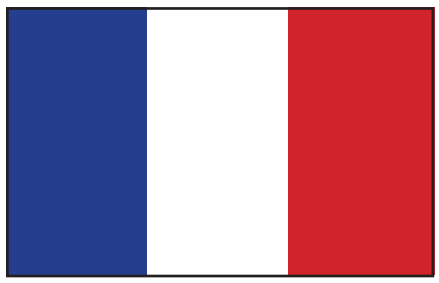
"STARTALK put Russian back on the watch list as a critical language that people should be studying. ... There are more students entering the Russian program. Sometimes it's children who have been adopted from Russia who want a connection to their heritage."

– Rita Oleksak



"Chinese teaching is evolving in this country, and the strategies for teaching a language that is radically different from our own are advancing rapidly."

– Erin Murray



"French enrollment has been increasing steadily in the last few years. As a French teacher in the district, this is very exciting."

– Kathleen Lessard

"Studies have shown that the study of Latin and Ancient Greek increases English and other world language vocabulary dramatically."

– Elena Sada

discontinued or de-prioritized French programs when adding in the option to take Chinese, but that is not the case in Glastonbury.

Oleksak believes the interest still exists for French because it is spoken in a variety of countries and settings.

The districts that offer Chinese are noticing a growing interest.

In Glastonbury, the number of enrolled students has increased by 20 for the upcoming school year.

Although Chinese sees lower enrollment numbers than other languages in Simsbury, Murray said students often stay until the AP level, giving it a high retention rate.

It will be expanded to the elementary school level via after school programs to give students a taste of the culture and language.

"The perception is that the language is difficult; however, we have strong teachers who attend methods conferences every year," she said. "Chinese teaching is evolving in this country, and the strategies for teaching a language that is radically different from our own are advancing rapidly. Our Chinese program

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is unique in that we have few heritage speakers, yet our students perform very well."

Chinese is a new world language in West Hartford. This fall, it will continue to be offered in grades nine through 12, and will expand to the Charter Oak International Academy and the middle schools.

"There, we will start by offering it to six groups of sixth-grade students across the three middle schools," Sada explained. "The language has been very well-received. Although Mandarin is only one of the spoken forms of Chinese, in its written form, it is the Chinese language used by the largest population on the globe, and its importance has grown dramatically in the past decade. Chinese is the third largest subgroup of immigrants in West Hartford."

With so many new options for world language classes, districts are still seeing interest in the ancient languages.

Oleksak said colleagues outside of Glastonbury are impressed upon learning that there are three full-time Latin teachers in the district. West Hartford has a "small but solid demand" among students who want to take Latin or Ancient Greek, often because they wish to pursue a specialization in English or in the medical field.

"Contrary to popular belief, Latin and Ancient Greek are not dead languages; rather, they are the foundation of most common modern languages," Sada said. "Studies have shown that the study of Latin and Ancient Greek increases English and other world language vocabulary dramatically. ... Classic languages never die, since they are present in the foundations of all 'modern' languages."

Glastonbury has offered Russian to its students for almost 60 years and is back on an upswing, Oleksak said. It started in 1957, at the time of Sputnik, but she said Russian continues to be a critical need language.

It is offered through a grant from STARTALK, a program funded by the National Security Agency and administered by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.

One of the program's aims is to increase the number of students enrolled in the study of critical-need languages based on national security concerns and global economic competitiveness.

"STARTALK put Russian back on the watch list as a critical language that people should be studying, which gave us a boost," Oleksak said. "This year, we had elementary and level 1 [courses]. Now we're up to level 1, 2 and 3. There are more students entering the Russian program. Sometimes it's children who have been adopted from Russia who want a connection to their heritage."

Regardless of what languages are offered in a given district, many are expanding the availability into younger grades or making world language a requirement for graduation.

In Wethersfield, starting with the graduating class of 2020, earning two credits in a world language is now a graduation requirement, Dastoli said.

"We are excited about this new graduation requirement, as the acquisition of a second or third language correlates with a higher academic achievement, benefits the development of different cognitive abilities and helps students develop a more positive attitude towards different cultures," she said. "Being proficient in a second or third language is an amazing skill for our graduates to use in their future careers."

World language classes are electives at Glastonbury High School, yet 96 percent of the students study at least one language, while 15 percent study two and 10 percent study three.

"It's not important which language you study – it's important that you study a language," Oleksak said. **WHL**

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How to *save* on school supplies

Back to school season can be as expensive for parents as it is exciting for students. Once the initial letdown of the end of summer vacation wears off, many kids are excited to return to school, where they can see their friends, study their favorite subjects and participate in extracurricular activities.

Parents of school-aged youngsters may share in that excitement while also knowing that back to school season can stretch their budgets. One of the ways to salvage those budgets is to save on school supplies. Fortunately, there are several ways parents can do just that.

Be patient. Shopping early can save shoppers money in many instances, but parents may benefit by exercising patience when it comes to buying school supplies for their children. Teachers often give students lists of supplies they will need for each class, and parents who wait to receive such lists can avoid spending money on items their kids won't need. Even if you wait it out, you may be able to get a head start, as some teachers may post supply lists on school websites, while others might email lists to parents before back to school season hits full swing.

Take inventory. If you have more than one child, chances are you already have lots of school supplies around the house. Dust off kids' backpacks and study areas from last school year to determine which supplies you need to buy and which you already have. Going forward, encourage kids to store their supplies in a predetermined area once the school year ends, as this will make next year's inventory that much easier to examine and assess.

Spend more now to save later. While inexpensive supplies can be hard to resist, such items likely won't withstand the test of time, forcing you to spend time and money each year buying replacement supplies. Paying more now for certain items, including stronger backpacks and more highly rated calculators, may end up saving you money in the long run, even if the initial pill is somewhat tough to swallow.

Use technology to your advantage. Department stores and businesses that sell school supplies, such as pharmacies and office stores, may or may not discount too many items once back to school season hits full swing. But savvy parents can still find deals by using technology to their advantage when shopping for school supplies. Download apps like RetailMeNot to your smartphone and enable its updates so your phone essentially notifies you of any discounts the moment you walk into a given store. If you don't receive any updates, search for discounts via the app or the Internet as you shop. Chances are strong that there are deals to be had, even if you don't learn of the deals until you arrive at the store.

School supplies can be expensive, but parents can employ several strategies to save on school supplies now and in the future. **WHL**

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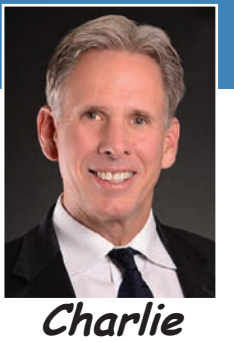

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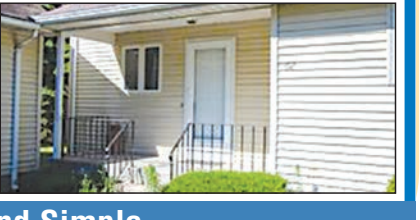

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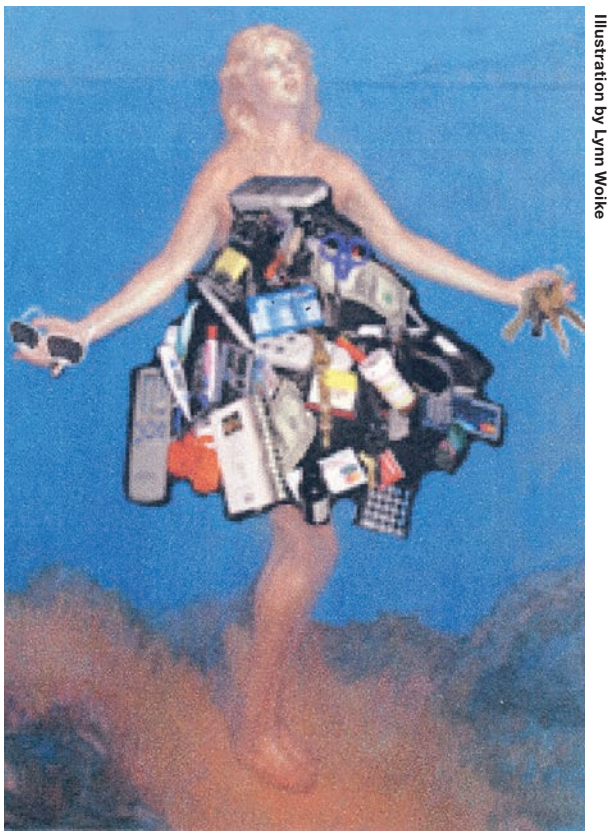

Illustration by Lynn Woike

The Greeks, Romans, Celts, Norse, Egyptians, Mayans and other ancient civilizations had a plethora of deities that helped with a specific thing or two related to their daily lives.

Since most religions now demand that only one god be worshipped, all the eggs have been put in one basket. In doing so, I think we have lost a lot of assistance with our existence.

For instance, Mercury is the Roman god of communication, financial gain, commerce and travel. The Greek equivalent is Hermes. But nobody builds shrines, makes offerings or holds festivals to honor them anymore.

The closest thing we have now are Apple Stores, built by Steve Jobs. They are places of commerce to which people travel to worship communication devices, all of which have large amounts of digital information measured in bytes. First it was kilo- then mega- and giga-; now we're up to counting terabytes. It won't be long before we reach zettabytes, so I think Zetta would be a wonderful name for the Goddess of Technology. Someone to pray to when your phone gets wet, your computer spontaneously switches to the blue screen of death or your tablet won't stay charged. When prayed to daily, this goddess also remembers login information.

If the idea of multiple gods and goddesses is against your religion, think of them as saints, guardian angels or prophets.

I don't know if the Babylonians or the Incas had need of a central nervous system stimulant, but it's clear our civilization does, to the point people are physically dependent on caffeine. You can't drive two miles in most directions without being able to get coffee at a drive-though window. One of these places has adopted the Goddess Caffeina as its logo, in which she wears a crown topped with a star. Known to some as Our Lady of Latte, she imparts energy to the tired and clarity to the fog-brained.

I think we need a goddess of weight loss. A deity who has the power to negate the calories in chocolate, transform a craving for potato chips into a desire for broccoli and make your favorite pair of jeans still fit. Someone like Calorieena, a gluten-free, bacon-loving Paleo Warrior. Organic vegetables, wild berries and clothing that is now too big would be offerings left on the altar of this guardian of weight loss.

I don't know about you, but I often need help remembering a word. That word. The word that if I manage to get out of my brain, gets stuck on the tip of my tongue. The one hovering on the edge of my consciousness, mocking me. A goddess who could produce that word might be called Thesauria, and she would be revered.

I know I also need help dealing with the opinions of many I encounter on social media during political campaigns. I find myself resorting to sarcasm, which is not particularly helpful, even when done with humor. Now, if we had a god who could intervene in such instances, the world might be a better place. The Great Sarcasmo, perhaps, or maybe, Sarcasi?

Doesn't everyone need Findderina, the Goddess of Finding Lost Items? The one who knows the location of what you lost even before you know it's missing, and, then, produces it in return for your heartfelt gratitude.

Since St. Christopher was dethroned as the patron saint of travelers, we have needed someone else to sit on our dashboards and watch over us. Someone who could get us where we wanted to go. A deity with maps and coordinates and the ability to recalculate. I think such a god might be called Geepeaesse. He'd be a god with contact information and live traffic reports. He'd have the ability to turn red lights green, keep tires from deflating and gas tanks from running dry.

Geepeaesse's twin is Rodezen, the God of Tranquil Travel. He is the one I find myself needing to call on every time some driver pulls an idiot move anywhere near me.

These are just a few of the divine helpers we could be calling on to help get through our days. **WHL**

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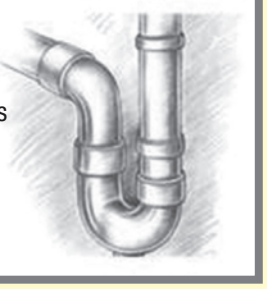

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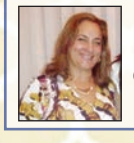

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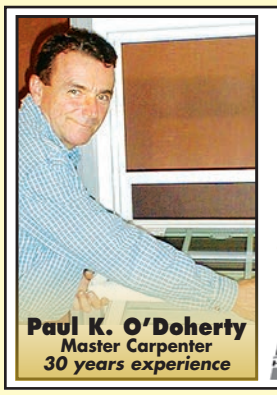

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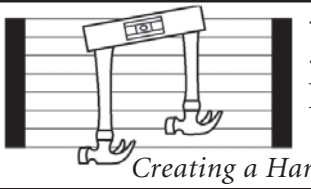

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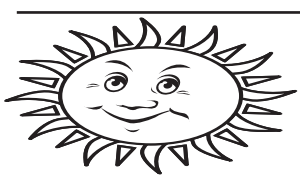

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Services

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Gamblers Anonymous

Gamblers Anonymous can help you. Take back your life. Phone: 855-2-CALL-GA 855-222-5542 to speak with someone. Gamblers Anonymous is a non-profit fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem. www.gamblersanonymous.org.

Classified Ads:

$40 for up to 20 words, 30¢ each additional word

Classified Ads run monthly in all 6 of our local publications. If ordering by mail, please make checks out to TurleyCT or provide your Credit Card information. PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY DEADLINE OR YOUR AD WILL NOT RUN. We accept Mastercard, Visa and American Express. Make checks payable to TurleyCT.

3 WAYS TO PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD!
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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern
When the AQI is in this range:	*..air quality conditions are:*
0 to 50	Good
51 to 100	Moderate
101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
151 to 200	Unhealthy
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy
301 to 500	Hazardous

Air quality index

Knowing the quality of the air, how clean or how polluted, helps gauge the level of impact it can have on one's health – especially to those with respiratory distress, COPD, asthma, etc.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "ground-level ozone and airborne particles are the two pollutants that pose the greatest threat to human health in this country." So in the summer/warmer months, in order to know how to best deal with not-so-great air quality – the Air Quality Index (or AQI), was developed as a guide, to simplify things.

The AQI has a numerical value that corresponds to a category that is color coded ... reporting levels of ozone, particle pollution, and other common air pollutants on the same scale. The range goes from 0 to 500: the higher the value, the greater the concern that poor air quality will have an impact. As soon as the number goes over 100, those in "sensitive groups" should be aware.

This summer, and going forward you may notice a higher frequency of "Air Quality" Alerts here in Connecticut – and there is a reason why. It is not because the quality of air is any worse, it has to do with a change in the criteria (the threshold) used to issue the alert, by the EPA. **WHL**

TurleyCT Community Publications
Life Publications The Valley Press The West Hartford Press
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Make waves and great friends at The Heights.

The Marjorie B. Doty Aquatic Center at The Heights senior living community has become the meeting place for exercise, relaxation and healthy get-togethers our residents enjoy, including:

- Aquacize Class
- Arthritis Class
- Water Walking Class
- Open Swim

Our Doty Aquatic Center is just one of the highlights of the wellness-oriented, active lifestyle at The Heights. As a resident you'll also enjoy a beautiful, spacious apartment or cottage, exceptional dining, clubs, lectures, special events and healthy outdoor activities.

Rental living at The Heights means peace of mind with **no entrance fee** and priority access to our full continuum of health care services.

Get into the swim of things at The Heights

MOVE-IN SPECIAL

Move to The Heights and get up to **$1,000** towards our moving company services, including our downsizing specialist who will help set up your apartment or cottage, so when you arrive, your new home will be ready. Enjoy all of this plus **one month's FREE rent!**

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Come explore The Heights

Join us for an Open House and Luncheon:

Sat., August 13th and Wed., August 24th.
Event starts at 10:45 a.m.

For more information, or to RSVP for upcoming events, call:

860-953-1201
ext 403

The Heights
Avery Heights • A Village of CHI

COLDWELL BANKER
RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

FARMINGTON – Autumn Estates, Farmington's Active Adult Community. Wide Open Floor Plan features 9 ft+ Ceilings. Gourmet Granite Kitchen GE Stainless Appliances. $650,000

Billie Reese 860.841.2457

WINSTED – Highland Lake. Your dream waterfront home awaits you on Highland Lake! Fully remodeled 3BR/3BA year round property with fireplaced walkout LL, gorgeous, level yard & dock directly on the water. Enjoy the stunning lake views, boating & swimming. LP. $595,000

T. Dalton Faenza 860.205.4263

WEST HARTFORD – Walk to Blue Back Square and WH Center! Well maintained, charming home boasts an enormous master BR & fin basement! House updates includes refinished hdwd flrs, new windows, updated elec, new gutters, and newer roof. $340,000

Joyce Aparicio 860.913.4231

WEST HARTFORD – Wonderful 3BR, 3BA Ranch. Hardwood Floors through out. 1st Floor Master w/Full BA & 1st floor Den. Eat in Kitchen w/all new SS Appliances. CAIR. 2 Car Attached Garage. $339,900

Billie Reese 860.841.2457

WEST HARTFORD – Updated to today's lifestyle! 3BD/2+BA split level, open w/natural light, hdwd flrs thru out, kit updates include custom soft pull cabs, SS apps, granite, island; mzone heat, new roof, furn & windows! $289,900

Debbie Bogatz 860.930.2189

WEST HARTFORD – Enjoy the easy lifestyle of condo life while living close to shopping & restaurants. Pristine condition, wood floors throughout, granite in kitchen & baths, 10 foot ceilings. $289,000

Tracey Hollerbach 860.305.7993

WEST HARTFORD – Spacious 1BR 1.5 bath condo. Large living room with gas fireplace & walkout to patio. 9 ' ceilings, crown moldings & hardwood floors, private club house & gym. $282.000

Phyllis Atkins 860.670.1776

BLOOMFIELD – Spacious 5 BR, 3.5 BA colonial bordering Gillette Ridge golf course! Renovated kitchen w/granite counters & breakfast bar, formal LR with fireplace, huge FR w/built-ins, fireplace and French doors to patio. $259,900

Michael Antisdale 860.803.6560

FARMINGTON – Location, location! Rarely available spacious Townhouse w/2BRs & 2.1 BAs in the Old Mountain Village Complex with close proximity to UConn medical center. Kitchen w/newer SS apps and breakfast bar that opens to dining room. $269,000

Mary Rose Sinatro 860.614.4566

WEST HARTFORD – Charming 3BR, 2 full BA Colonial. Hardwood floors throughout, freshly painted. Large living room with wood burning fireplace. Kitchen with breakfast bar. 1st floor laundry. $249,000

Chris Scigulinsky 860.906.7726

WEST HARTFORD – Well kept 3 BR in Aiken School district. Hardwood floors in fireplaced LR & DR. Newer roof, windows & electrical. Large 20x20 deck overlooking spacious level, fenced back yard. $239,900

Mary Rose Sinatro 860.614.4566

WEST HARTFORD – 1 bedroom, 1 1/2 bath condominium. Living room with fireplace & French door to patio. DR, EIK, large master suite with walk-in closet & spa bath. $234,000

Phyllis Atkins 860.670.1776

WEST HARTFORD – New to the market on rarely available St. 3 bedroom 2 bath Raised Ranch in move in condition! Hardwood floors, updated kitchen, family room, deck. $229,900

Sherri Schwartz 860.883.0178

FARMINGTON – Move in condition! 2BR, 1.1 bath condo! Open living & dining area has a wood burning fireplace & sliders that lead out to a private patio area looking out onto Farmington Plantation Golf Course. $224,999

Chris Scigulinsky 860.906.7726

WEST HARTFORD – This adorable Ranch is in a quiet yet convenient neighborhood near Wolcott Park. Easy one floor living with 3 BR, 1.5 baths. Formal DR, Hardwood floors, Newer roof, windows, doors and siding. $209,000

Sherri Schwartz 860.883.0178

MANCHESTER – Completely remodeled cape cod home. This beauty boasts an over-sized garage, patio, nice size yard! Freshly painted and refinished gleaming floors. Finished basement has a large entertainment room. $168,900

Joyce Aparicio 860.913.4231

Sylvie Fillion, Mortgage Representative & Senior Loan Officer For Special Financing Opportuinties On Any Of Our Listings, Please Contact Sylvie at 860-570-2520 • NMLS #110720 & CT #5584

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